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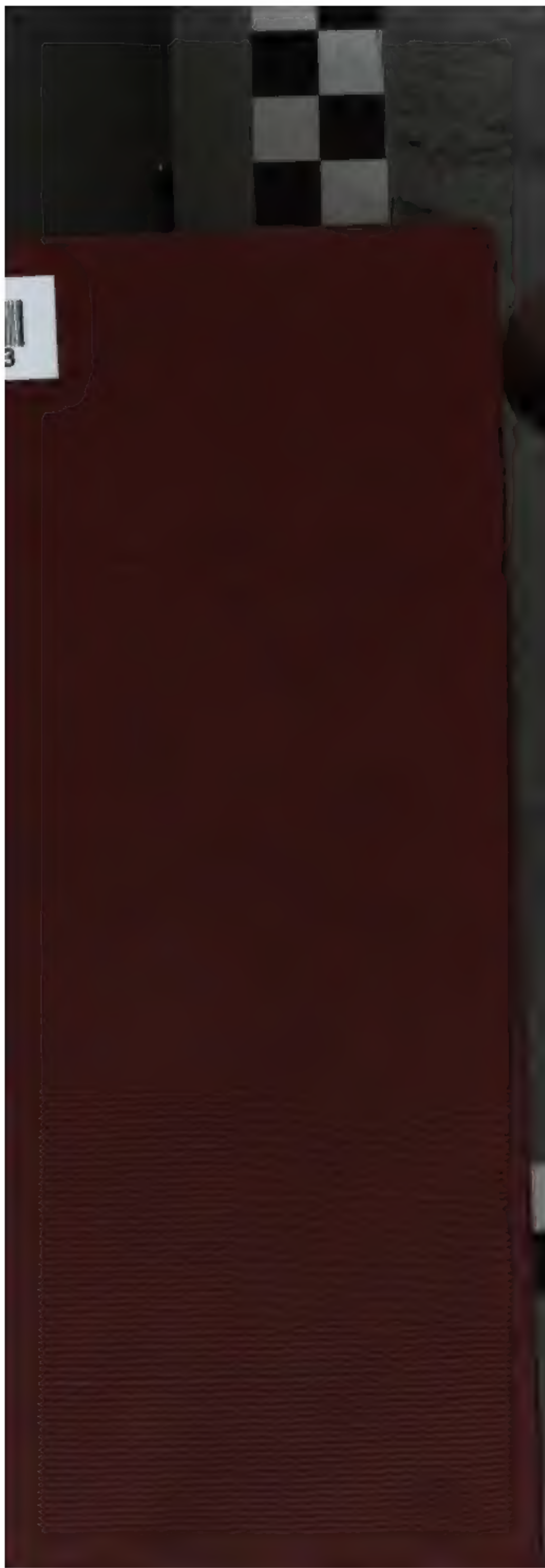
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*James Lenox.*





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1. Apologetics, Christian

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**Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion.**

**AN ESSAY TOWARD AN ARRANGEMENT OF THE PROOFS OF THE BEING OF A  
GOD. BY THE REV. ALEXANDER DUNCAN, MIDCALDER.**

**ANALOGY OF RELIGION. BY JOSEPH BUTLER, LL.D. LATE LORD BISHOP OF  
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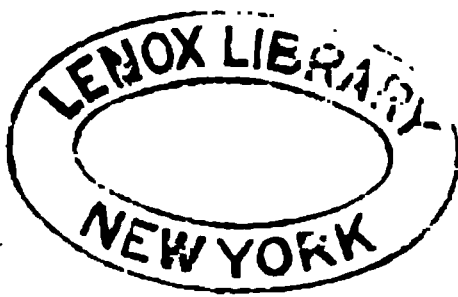
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**MDCCCXXXIV.**





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**AN ESSAY**  
**TOWARD**  
**AN ARRANGEMENT OF THE PROOFS**  
**OF THE**  
**BEING OF A GOD,**  
**AND OF**  
**FACTS ILLUSTRATIVE OF HIS ATTRIBUTES:**  
**WITH A**  
**SOLUTION OF DIFFICULTIES,**  
**ESPECIALLY**  
**IN REFERENCE TO PROVIDENCE.**

---

**BY**  
**ALEXANDER DUNCAN,**  
**MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, MID-CALDER.**

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*Πατήρ των φωτων, μόνος σοφός,  
παντοκράτωρ.*

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## PREFACE.

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THE prefixed Subject of the following Essay is given in the precise terms in which it was announced to the public, a considerable number of years ago, when competition was invited for the Burnet prizes. It is understood that about fifty Essays were sent to the appointed Judges, who were connected with the University of Aberdeen. The author is not ashamed of having failed in competition with the two eminent divines to whom the honours of success were awarded,—the one Dr. Brown, Professor of Divinity and Principal of Marischal College,—the other Mr. Sumner, afterwards advanced to a high place in the Church of England. Among the Essays presented, not a few, doubtless, were worthy of being given to the public; but the authors seem to have been of a different opinion. Their publication, indeed, was not necessary, nor would it have been proper at that time. The Essay now offered, was laid aside, and the author, though he did not conceal its existence from some intimate friends, never entertained the slightest idea of publishing it, till it was solicited for the purpose of commencing this Family Library,

as embracing a more extensive view than Paley's Natural Theology. The series being intended to comprise original works, the propriety of beginning with one of that description, was also suggested and urged. For these reasons he has yielded, but chiefly influenced by the consideration, that Paley's Natural Theology is well known, has passed through several editions, and is already in almost every library of any extent. With that admirable work he has interfered as little as possible. The publication of the Bridge-water Treatises, occasioned some hesitation about the necessity or propriety of submitting any thing of a similar kind. No one will think of coping with the known talents and gigantic strength of at least some of the learned gentlemen to whom the subjects of these Treatises have been committed. The date of the composition of the Essay, however, will exculpate the author from having acted on this presumptuous idea. Then the number and expense of the Treatises, may prevent the discussion of the several subjects from becoming generally useful. The present tendency to changes, too, in whatever light we may view it, taken in connexion with that knowledge of the scepticism of certain eminent philosophers, which the ordinary classes of society can scarcely fail to acquire, in consequence of the great and on many accounts most desirable diffusion of science, seem to justify every proper attempt to uphold Religion, by clearly establishing its first principles. Finally, the author consents the more cheerfully to the publication of the Essay, because he finds, in reviewing and revising it, that it contains a more full discussion of difficulties, than either of the prize Essays above referred to, particularly on the subject of the Origin and Permanent Existence of Moral Evil, to which as the main difficulty his attention was chiefly directed.

As for the execution of the work, the kind of treatise expected, at the time when it was prepared, ne-

cessarily prevents it from having so popular a cast as might have been desirable. The “Christian Philosopher” by Dr. Dick, richly stored with able illustrations, both of the doctrines and defects of Natural Theology, and the beautiful and interesting work of the Rev. Mr. Fergus, are much better suited to ordinary readers, as are also the well-known works of Ray and Derham. The whole process of metaphysical reasoning the author would gladly have omitted, his own conviction resting chiefly on the Proofs of Design ; those who dislike the former had better pass at once to the latter, and thence to the solution of difficulties,—which may be useful to any reader, though completely established in the faith of Christianity. The sphere of metaphysical argument, however, (which is not precisely what is styled reasoning *a priori*, but closely connected with facts), has been thought worthy of occupation by such masters as Bentley, Clarke, Stapfer, Buddæus, Vitringa, and even Sir Isaac Newton. It was therefore deemed proper to attempt an exhibition of what appeared to be forcible, or incontrovertible, in this department. And since metaphysical reasoning has been resorted to by sceptics,—since, indeed, this species of reasoning is most frequently the source of doubt, the very thing which has blinded many to the evidence of facts, though continually pressing upon them in all their investigations of Nature, it becomes absolutely necessary to encounter it. We must study the tactics of scepticism, trace its most secret operations, and grapple with it in all its forms, otherwise we shall not be able to dislodge it from every refuge, or expose its irrationality in the various and often singularly insidious aspects it assumes. By simply surveying the various departments of Nature, and pointing out the manifestations of divine power, wisdom, and goodness, a more pleasing work, like those already mentioned, might have been produced. But

the purpose for which the theme was prescribed seemed to require a different arrangement, and the most rigid accuracy of argumentation. Though this has occasioned repeated recurrence to the same departments of Nature, and sometimes to the same facts, yet it will be found they are recurred to on different grounds, and in new aspects or relations.

But let apologizing be dropt. The work may serve to confirm the believer, and to fortify the inquirer against error and seduction. As for those who occasion the discussion, or call for the demonstration, there is but little ground to hope that they will be reclaimed by any such works. When we think of some of the ablest astronomers, anatomists, chemists, and other scrutinizers of nature, continuing unconvinced, or failing to shew their recognisance of a Deity, amidst all their contemplations and discoveries,—it is not likely that scepticism, and the want of religion, with which it is necessarily connected, will ever be removed, otherwise than by the indelible idea of the true dignity of man as a rational being, and the invincible sense of responsibility connected with this, rousing them to think seriously of present criminality and future retribution, and making them feel the insufficiency of all natural science to afford them either consolation or hope. A supernatural power, which they refuse to acknowledge, is able to shake, as it has shaken, the firmest determination to disregard divine authority, to condemn as superstitious all popular belief, to brave consequences, and combat even the natural principle of fear in the most rational direction it can possibly take. They can, in fact, be reclaimed only by conscience impelling them under the influence of this supernatural power, first to look around for the relief suited to fallen beings, then to examine the credibility of those books which profess to be the records of a Revelation calculated to afford it, and ultimately

to submit to the dictates of that Revelation. They must just be converted as other men are. And by their conversion to Christianity and the faith of the Gospel, they will find they are no more required to surrender any thing valuable in natural science, than Boyle, Newton, Pascal, Cuvier, Bonnet, and other illustrious philosophers, while their pleasure is greatly augmented in contemplating the works of nature, and they themselves are fitted for rendering the due tribute of honour and homage to the Most High. May the necessity of recourse to Revelation for the solution of difficulties, as evinced in this and similar treatises, be felt by all who are induced to peruse them ; and if unhappily entangled in either atheistical or infidel scepticism, may it conciliate them to a candid perusal of the Scriptures, and ultimately lead them to join with the Christian in gratitude to God “ the Father of lights,” for the measure of satisfaction he has been pleased to afford. “ What we know not now, we shall know hereafter.”

“ The work such as it is,” to borrow the language of the elegant Jortin, “ is dedicated to the service of Truth, by one who would gladly attend her triumphs, —as her soldier, if he has had the honour to fight successfully under her banner,—or as a captive tied to her chariot-wheels, if he has, though undesignedly, offended against her.”



## **SUBJECT.**

**THE EVIDENCES THAT THERE IS A BEING ALL-POWERFUL, WISE, AND GOOD, BY WHOM EVERY THING EXISTS; PARTICULARLY TO OBVIATE DIFFICULTIES REGARDING THE WISDOM AND GOODNESS OF THE DEITY, AND THIS IN THE FIRST PLACE FROM CONSIDERATIONS INDEPENDENT OF WRITTEN REVELATION, AND IN THE SECOND PLACE FROM THE REVELATION OF THE LORD JESUS; AND FROM THE WHOLE TO POINT OUT THE INFERENCES MOST NECESSARY FOR, AND USEFUL TO MANKIND.**

---

### **IMPORTANCE OF THE SUBJECT.**

**NOTWITHSTANDING** the consequences which may justly be dreaded by sinful and incorrigible beings, it is certainly of all things most desirable that there should be a God. Social order, and civil government, with all the sublime contemplations of Religion, its dignifying effect, and powerful consolations, clearly depend on the grand principle, that there is a Being who made and who governs the universe. Such a Being must be infinitely worthy of the adoration of his rational creatures, he must have a claim on their implicit obedience, and to him they must all be accountable. Here lie the foundations of human happiness, and particularly of that moral excellence, which even in this life, approximates the rational creature to its highest attainable perfection; here too are the securities, and the only effective securities, of every constitution calculated to promote the present or the future felicities of man.

So intimately is our future existence, that prospect which nature trembles to forego, connected with the grand truth of the being of a God, that the former fades from our view in pro-



portion to the degree of our scepticism with regard to the latter. No genuine atheist can detach from his system the dismal doctrine of annihilation ; nor has he any data on which to establish a connexion between the present and a future state, were he even in spite of his system to assert the futurity and eternity of his being.

The abstract idea of a supreme physical perfection, or of a supreme morality, independent of any adequate subject in whom it might reside, or a sufficiently powerful agent to enforce it, cannot supply the place of a Deity. Set aside the idea of a God in its proper conception, and what a blank is produced in the universe ! No all-pervading presence, no regulating providence,—no supremely intelligent and active Being to whom we might refer all our conceptions of excellence,—no ultimate Judge to whom we might appeal for the redress of wrongs often irreparable on earth, or whose interference we might expect to “bear up the pillars of the world,” and cause “judgment return to righteousness,”—no common Parent whom we might venerate, to whom we might render that homage of gratitude which it is so painful to suppress, or on whom we might depend amidst the ever-varying circumstances of a lot evidently regulated by none of the laws of nature ;—no one to whom under the impulse of feelings still more interesting we might look up as the Author of salvation. How bewildered would we be ! incapable of determining whence we came, or whither we are going ; surrounded with mystery,—every incident, and every object, only calculated to perplex the unceasing activities of the rational powers, which yet seem to be formed for understanding and turning to account the operations of nature, and even for penetrating beyond these into subjects of a still higher order ; we would be left without motive or hope befitting the place which we hold in the scale of being, and under a feeling of desolation, and desertion, which no language can describe.

#### PLAN.

On account of its importance, and the deep interest it must ever excite, the existence of a Deity has been the theme of the sentimentalist, the philosopher, and the divine. Works of taste have been given to the world, in which a fascinating eloquence has traced and described the indications of wisdom, power, and goodness in the various departments of nature. Besides these, we have demonstrations in a variety of forms by

masters whose talents and force of reasoning seem to bid defiance to every attempt to surpass them. It may well be supposed that every department of evidence has, at one time or another, been explored, and that therefore no new arguments are now to be expected. Why indeed, unless we are dissatisfied with those which have long commended themselves to the reason and common sense of mankind, should we anxiously search for new arguments, on a subject already so ably and so amply discussed? Less, perhaps, than might be desirable, has been done for solving the difficulties connected with the doctrine of Providence; but every thing has been done, that can reasonably be required, for proving the existence of a Deity, and this point once established, both philosophers and divines have justly concluded, that an argument arises *a priori*, for the wisdom and equity with which the universe must be governed. But if there be a God, it is also probable, he may have given to that world the government of which is most perplexed, some *revelation* of his plan, for the purpose of explaining his ways as far as present vindication may require, and inducing a patient submission to what is still mysterious, in the hope of its final development. Should books professing to contain this revelation exist, it must be our interest to ascertain their credibility, that we may profit by their lights. And doubtless under the confessed deficiency of all human reasonings, often impelling to take refuge in mere conjecture, the disclosure of a plan, worthy of God, justified by facts, and calculated either to solve difficulties, or indicate the reasons of their present existence, will be at once a satisfactory evidence of the credibility of the books, and our last resource on the general question of a Providence.

With regard to the being of a God, the demonstration does not depend, even *a posteriori*, on a long induction of particulars, or the combined force of a multitude of separate arguments; a single proof of intelligence in the structure of the universe, or any of the works of nature, may justly be regarded as decisive. Since, however, the grand truth of the existence of a Deity, is the basis not only of a civil order, but of all religion, and since this truth must be presupposed in our reasonings on Providence, it may be pleasing as well as highly confirmatory, to survey in detail the chief heads of argument, to arrange the sources of evidence, and shew how abundant and how varied they are.

Part I.—Comprises this exhibition of evidence. Different methods have been followed, by authors who take a general

view of the subject. The most common is, to divide the arguments into three classes,—the Historical, the Metaphysical, and the Physical,—the two last comprehending the reasonings *a priori* and *a posteriori*. Much, perhaps, might be abstracted from these classes, and with greater propriety arranged under a previous head,—presumptions in favour of the being of a God; for it seems undeniable, that a laudable anxiety to sustain this great first principle, has assigned to certain reasonings on the question, a place far too important for sceptical scrutiny. These reasonings, however, are not unworthy of regard, and a less commanding title than that of positive evidence, might secure for them a due measure of candid attention from the sceptic. Our *first*, or preparatory Section, is constructed upon this idea, without, however, professing a decisive opinion on the merits of its contents, since the structure of the human mind is so different in different individuals, that what may be deemed only presumptive evidence by some, may be held to be positive, and sufficiently conclusive, by others.—Follows the method, by which any person designing to investigate the subject, may attain full satisfaction, in Section *second* on the existence of a first cause, Section *third* the proofs of an intelligent first cause, and Section *fourth* the phenomena which, on the supposition of such a cause, must be considered as the proper results of wisdom, power, and goodness. A *fifth* Section is added on the place which the very existence of books, claiming the high character of a divine revelation, may hold in the argument.

Part II.—Is devoted to the solution of difficulties, whether such as are adduced by the sceptic, or such as may occasionally prove stumbling even to the saint. Here in sections *first* and *second*, a survey is taken of the present constitution of things, with the view of solving, on the plan marked out in the question, difficulties founded on the idea of imperfection, or that of disorder. In section *third* an attempt is made to delineate the plan of divine administration disclosed in the sacred oracles, as the ultimate *fons solutionum*.

The Conclusion must embrace in terms of the question “the inferences most necessary for and useful to mankind.” \*

\* By Atheist in the course of this Essay, the writer would be understood merely to personify the propensity to doubt or oppose, and the various forms in which it may operate, without alluding to the existence of real atheists, much less deciding affirmatively the question about the possibility of absolute atheism in any of the human race.

## PART FIRST.

---

**"THE EVIDENCES THAT THERE IS A BEING ALL-POWERFUL, WISE, AND GOOD, BY WHOM EVERY THING EXISTS."**

---

### SECT. I.

#### PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS.

**I.—**Were not the prior conception of Divinity, or of what should constitute a Deity, possible, neither the atheist could deny, nor the theist demonstrate the existence of a God.

**II.—**By the term God, is meant, a Being possessed of all possible excellences, spiritual in his nature, infinite, all-sufficient, and supreme.

The possession of all possible excellence, is the first conception. It is formed by an effort of abstraction, removing all known or conceivable imperfections, and attaching all known or supposable excellences, physical and moral. The idea cannot, of course, be that of a mere power, but of an intelligent agent, whatever be the mode of his existence.—Spirituality is essential, since matter is plainly less perfect than spirit, and has never in any stage of refinement, not even when analyzed and exhibited in its purest and simplest forms, approached one whit nearer to intelligence, or the susceptibility of moral qualities, than in its grossest state. As a spirit, or spirit in the highest and most proper sense of the term, the Deity must be invisible and intangible, not extended, capable of acting upon matter, but without being necessarily connected with it.—Then, whatever the Deity is either in nature or perfection, in that, to be discriminated from every other being, he

must be Infinite.—Infinitude again will necessarily exalt its subject beyond our comprehension, in his natural attributes, and in the manner of possessing and exercising his moral perfections. It will exalt him too beyond all measurement, with regard to intellect, activity, and the sphere of both. It necessarily determines also the unity of the Deity.—As the result of these properties, he must be self-existent, and all-sufficient, that is sufficient to himself and to the creatures to whom he may be pleased to give being.—Supremacy follows, founded on his priority, his excellence, and his relation to the creatures. He must be regarded as their Creator, their Preserver, their Proprietor, and, according to their place in the scale of being, also their Governor, their Lawgiver and Judge.

III.—The existence of such a Being involves no contradiction.

The only cavil on this head is, that the mystery of the subject must render a decision on its conformity to reason utterly impossible. If by a mystery be meant something either wholly or partially unknown, then indeed, as long as the secrecy continues, we must be incapable of deciding whether it involves a contradiction or not. But if it only mean something so sublime, that though the outline be before the mind, the *pleroma* or fulness stretches far beyond the power of human intellect, we are sufficiently qualified for judging. The idea of a God is mysterious not in the first, but solely in the second respect. The several parts of the outline, usually denominated the attributes of Deity, are presented to the mind as distinctly and as clearly as the properties of matter. They are Intelligence, Power, Wisdom, Moral Excellence, Spirituality, Supremacy, &c. None of these involves a contradiction; nor does the ascription of the whole to one Being, for this is only to suppose a Being different from all those to which imperfection in some degree or form is essential; and it cannot be proved that imperfection is so necessarily connected with existence, that there can be no being exalted above it.

If it be alleged that as there might have been other senses in the creatures of which we can form no idea, so, on the principle of infinitude, properties the very conception of which never entered the human mind, may and even must belong to the Being supposed, and that therefore we are still precluded from judging, since the very outline cannot be said to be before the mind,—the allegation will terminate in a mere sophism; for it is by what reason already imputes or attributes to such a

Being, that it must judge of all that may be possible, though unknown or even beyond the grasp of conception,—and since the very formation of the idea is the effect of reason, it is essential to the idea that every thing which could imply contradiction be removed.

The question in fact relates not to the idea, on which alone the cavil is founded, but to the existence of the Being of whom this idea is formed in the mind. And certainly the supposition that such a Being exists is nowise at variance with any principle of right reason. Set aside the objections *a posteriori*, which constitute the difficulties relative to Providence to be afterwards considered, and no Atheist has ever attempted to prove *a priori* that such a Being as the Deity must be supposed to be, cannot possibly exist.

IV.—Man is distinguished from the inferior animals by the possession of powers specifically adapted for recognising the being of a God.

The powers of the inferior animals, however similar to those of the human race, and whether different in kind or only in degree, have evidently a limit beyond which they cannot be advanced. They know that they are not supreme, many tribes either spontaneously, or through the impulse of fear, yielding to others, and all of them capable of being impressed with some sense of their subjection to man. Of any being superior to man, they seem to have no idea.\* Certain it is, they give no indications of the smallest approach to the conception of a God. The faintest rays of this sublime truth have never yet dawned upon brutal intellect; for even the respect which the inferior animals shew to man, is so different from the homage expressive of a sense of divinity, that it cannot be alleged they have the idea and have only mistaken the object. Nor is this all, the experience of ages has been unable to discover the least susceptibility of such an idea. To the human intellect, the conviction that though we rank higher than they, we are not supreme, is equally congenial; and although the power of con-

\* The unaccountable dread which some of them have occasionally discovered, their horror in passing through scenes dishonoured by murder and other crimes, or when their eyes have been opened to see what was invisible to man,—will not be pleaded by the Atheist, as the facts are in various respects hostile to his negation of Providence; but though the facts may be so well attested as to be worthy of a place among the evidences of a special Providence, it is likely that the fear which affects the animal, if it be not simply instinctive, is nothing more than an apprehension of danger from human beings or material objects, as the only things of which it can form an idea.

ceiving superior created beings belongs to us, so well adapted are our minds for conceiving a Being possessed of all possible perfection that the very idea of his existence is no sooner presented than admitted.

The Moral Faculty, or Conscience, whether a power distinct from judgment or only a certain modification of it, presents another form in which the existence of a Deity is recognised by the human race. The inferior animals are chiefly guided by instinct; but whatever degree of intelligence those which are more immediately connected with man or dependant upon him may possess, any thing resembling the idea of right and wrong, seems with them to originate entirely from a sense of responsibility, which, whether native or impressed, seems to have its ultimate reference to the power of the human race. Granting that in some instances they have given indications of a sense of equity, or a discernment of what was their due both on the head of rewards and punishments, still it is the equity of man to which they appeal as the last tribunal. In the human race the idea of right and wrong assumes a higher character. Although it may be greatly affected by circumstances, by education, by the complexion of civil or religious institutions, by custom, by personal habits, and even by the present state of man, it is nevertheless common and universal. As soon as a subject calculated to excite it is presented, it gives its decision, and the range of its acting is very extensive. Its decisions are not confined to the mere principle of retributive equity, they respect every species of moral qualities, and these not in the individual alone, or in those who may have wronged him or who have it in their power to punish or reward him, but wherever such qualities appear, and often without reference to personal interest. Now what is the basis of the obvious difference between this power in man, and the corresponding principle by which the inferior animals are properly adapted to the place they hold in the scale of being? Does it not lie in its reference to a universal system of government conducted by a Supreme Legislator and Judge? If man, who is superior to all visible beings in this world, deemed himself absolutely supreme, the only standard of conscience would be personal utility, regulated by experience of the reaction which must necessarily arise from living in society, and from mutual dependence. It might thus recognise the duties required by the different ranks and relations which exist among mankind, with the authority of civil constitutions founded on the social compact and surrender of rights. Beyond this sphere



there would be no place for its actings. But do we not find that conscience anticipates all such experience, and all reasoning from the fitness of things suggested by the idea of personal utility? Has it not shewn its reference to a universal system of government and a Supreme Legislator, even amongst the most barbarous nations, however imperfectly the one or the other might be conceived? An unnatural callousness may be induced, but prior to this, whence the horror that attends the most secret vices? Whence the dread that seizes the soul on the commission of a crime, even before reflection can awake to the possibility of detection or the danger of civil punishment, often when the shame of exposure and the pain of suffering are alike improbable, or equally despised? Whence too the dread that agitates the frame at the very thought of committing some deed of enormity, and prevails even amidst the fury of the passions impelling to commit it? The human being is afraid on account of his deeds, in cases and circumstances which release him from the fear of parental correction, of retaliation, and of legal punishment; afraid even when fully aware of his safety in these respects at the time.

V.—The very powers adapted to the recognising of Deity furnish a presumptive argument in favour of the being of a God.

It is not likely that the powers by which man is discriminated from the inferior animals, are wholly erroneous in their acting, or have for their ultimate object only an imaginary Being. As it is evident that in these animals, the degree of intelligence and the sense of accountableness, correspond to their place, ascertained by the known fact that man is their superior and lord, may we not justly conclude that the degree of human intelligence, and the sense of moral responsibility, correspond to our place, and argue the real existence of such a Being as that intelligence admits, and that responsibility respects? If the capacities of the lower animals be definitive of

\* To appeal only to one fact recorded in sacred history, similar to which many might be produced, the inhabitants of Melita, when they saw the viper fix upon the hand of the Apostle Paul, said among themselves, "No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, justice (*δικη*) suffereth not to live." As the emperor Julian is said to have belied his professed conviction that Jesus was an impostor, when on being mortally wounded he exclaimed *Vixisti Galilæe*, so the most atheistical have in moments of danger evinced the inexpugnable power of conscience, and shewn how infallibly the idea of right and wrong is connected with that sense of responsibility which ever refers to an Almighty Judge and Avenger.



their place, the capacities of man will be definitive of his ; and if the animals be not deceived in the ideas to which their capacities are adapted, we may presume that man is as little deceived in those to which his powers are adapted. The animals are right in recognising man as their lord, man in recognising a Deity as his Legislator and Judge.

Again, the place which man holds, as defined by his powers, is such as might have been expected from the ordination of an all-wise Creator and Supreme Governor. It was not necessary, nor would it have been proper that all creatures should have been of the same order, endowed with the same capacities for knowing and actively serving their Creator.—Not *necessary*, for the Creator may be passively glorified ; and if any intelligent beings exist to observe the manifestation of his glory, it may be enough that the rest be formed solely for passively shewing forth his praises.—Nor would it have been *proper* that all nature should have been animated, and equally intelligent. Such uniformity would have excluded all the scope which the present constitution of things affords, for a varied display of power, wisdom, and goodness. From the very mode of living and acting which belongs to corporeal beings, some creatures must be devoted to the use of others ; and it would not have been proper, that these should possess the same intellectual and moral excellence, with those for whose use they were intended.—But it was certainly to be expected that in each system or world, there would be a class possessed of the highest powers for recognising and serving the Creator,—a class intellectually and morally related to the Deity.

VI.—The consent of mankind also deserves a place among the presumptions in favour of the being of a God.

It is not likely that an error should ever become universal, that it should in all ages prevail against the truth, and that instead of being detected and exposed, it should rather be confirmed, by the progress of science. The persuasion of a God is universal, and the most ancient records do not conduct us to a period in the history of any people, when it did not exist ; we should search in vain for the date of its commencement. “ Nulla gens est tam fera et immansueta,” says Cicero, “ quæ non, etiamsi ignoret qualem Deum habere deceat, tamen habendum sciat.” \* This assertion was made with a just conception of the subject, by one who was well acquainted both with

\* De Legib. lib. 1.

the manners of the nations vanquished by the Roman arms, and with the researches of philosophers who had travelled in quest of knowledge. It has not been disproved by modern discoveries.

There are three forms in which atheism might exist,—absence of the idea of a God,—doubt,—and positive rejection. In the two last, certain individuals have fallen under the charge. Some have attempted to discard the idea; but their attempts, instead of making proselytes, have brought on themselves either the stigma of insanity, or the reprobation of society, and the vengeance of the secular power. “As soon,” says Grotius, “as their arguments were known, their opinion was exploded; it was evident it did not proceed from the right use of that reason which is common to all men, but either from an affectation of novelty, like that of the heathen philosopher who contended that snow was black, or from a corrupted mind, which, like a vitiated palate, does not relish things as they are.”\* The want of fixed principle with regard to the existence of a Deity constitutes sceptical atheism. Occasional doubts may obtrude themselves on the most enlightened philosopher, and even on the saint who is less in their way. But these doubts relate chiefly to the doctrine of Providence, and like other temporary clouds which pass over the mind, they are soon chased away, especially by the effulgence of that light which hath arisen on the soul of the saint, and will never suffer it again to be enveloped in darkness. Asaph felt for a season the distressing force and baneful effect of such doubts, but he went “into the sanctuary” of God whom he still acknowledged, and there obtained the desired relief.

Many of the Greek and Roman philosophers have been accused of atheism, but it were easy to shew that in some instances the accusation is unjust, while in others it rests on the misconception rather than the denial of a Deity. Grant that the doctrines of a few, who had the idea but wanted the full persuasion of his being, have either directly, or by native inference substantiated the charge, this will not infringe in the smallest degree on the argument to be drawn from the consent of mankind. In order to weaken it, some nation or people must be found, properly circumstanced, possessed of all the requisite advantages for giving full play to the rational powers in their native and unsophisticated actings, yet devoid of the idea. To subvert the argument entirely, it would be necessary to prove that this was the case with the majority

\* De Veritate, lib. 1. § 2.

of mankind, and not merely in some particular age, but from the earliest epochs of authentic history; or, which perhaps might be deemed equivalent, to shew that a people of the description supposed, felt themselves so superior to the weakness of others, that instead of admitting the idea when suggested, they preferred continuing as they were. But the argument is certainly strengthened, if the most unfavourably circumstanced be found to entertain the doctrine of a Deity, in common with the most civilized. The latter have not rejected the opinion of the former, nor condemned it as weak and absurd, attributable only to the barbarism of the state;—"the latter cannot well be supposed to be all deceptions, nor the former, the savage tribes of our race, to have found something with which to impose upon each other."\* In the transition from the rudeness of a savage state to the excellence acquired by science and civilization, no people has discarded the doctrine of a Deity. While the dreams that delighted the mind during the slumber of its faculties, and all the speculations of a barbarous superstition, have fled before the orient light, this doctrine has maintained its ground, the ancient belief has been more firmly maintained, and the Deity honoured in a manner more worthy of his nature and perfections. "Human inventions," to add another thought from Grotius on this subject, "are not always nor everywhere the same. They frequently changed. But as Aristotle has remarked, there is no place where this notion is not found, nor has time with its revolutions been able to alter or efface it."

In this universality of sentiment there is something remarkable. It seems to be the grand principle of intellectual concord and fellowship among the human race. Differing in language, in colour, in habits and customs,—differing widely in their opinions, in their religious rites, in their intellectual state, in their very capacities, they are all agreed in the belief of God.—What then? we are reduced to three conclusions: 1st, That the Existence of a Deity is an innate idea in the human mind; or 2d, that such is the relative constitution of nature and the human faculties, that the idea is necessarily suggested, and instantly commends itself to the mind; or 3d, that the doctrine has some time or other been ascertained by supernatural manifestation of the Deity. The first conclusion cannot be admitted, therefore one or other of the last, or both, must be granted; and on either supposition,

\* Grot. De Verit. l. 1, § 2.

consent of mankind furnishes at least a strong presumptive argument in favour of the doctrine.

VII.—The indications of the late Origin of the world also fall under the head of presumptive evidence.

These serve to disprove the eternity of the world. They may be detailed under three articles,—the state of human inventions,—the defects of history,—and certain appearances in nature.

Look to the state of *human inventions*. If the world, in its present form, hath existed from eternity, and if, as must be supposed, the human mind has been directed both according to its native energy, and the impulse of exterior circumstances, to the amelioration of the individual and social state, for a series of ages which defy all the powers of numeration,—why are the arts and sciences no farther advanced? Whence is it, that the accumulated efforts of genius have left the world in its present condition, only *rising* to eminence in science, manufactures, and commerce? Should it be alleged that disastrous eras have occurred to abolish the previous state of improvement, and keep the energies of the mind in constant occupation, this might imply more than the atheist would admit, but would still be insufficient to account for the fact. That the irruption of barbarous nations may have extinguished or greatly obscured for a time the lights of science in some civilized parts of the world, will be readily granted; but our argument militates against the existence of such barbarous nations, on the supposition of the eternity of the world. What æra could be so completely disastrous as to overwhelm all the treasures of science, and totally destroy the monuments of art, without at the same time destroying the whole human race? If any survived, these by the knowledge they retained, by the help of such books as might escape, and by the discovery and imitation of the models of art, must soon have retrieved the ancient wisdom, susceptible of progress almost from the very point to which it had been previously brought. Should it be alleged that there may have been a succession of Deluges almost universal, which may have occasioned the loss of previous arts and sciences, and served to retard the intellectual progress of mankind, the suggestion will be found insufficient for the purpose of the atheist. Unless these deluges had been more frequent than could consist with the laws and present order of nature, why, in the lapse of ages, might not the art of navigation have been devised and brought, as it now is, to a high degree of perfection? In this

case, is it not probable that all that acquaintance with science and the useful arts, which is essential to commerce, would have been preserved in the vessels traversing the face of the deep at the time of the deluge? Even a universal deluge, without some dreadful concussion all over the earth, would not have destroyed completely every monument of art. But whence is it, that although the signs of such a concussion having at one time or another taken place in connexion with a deluge, be sufficiently apparent, yet nothing but natural productions are found lodged in the bowels of the earth, no monuments of art indicative of any considerable progress previous to the catastrophe, nor even of any very great population?—But this is not all; unless we suppose such an extensive and improved state of navigation as would have prevented the total perdition of science and the arts, a universal deluge must have destroyed almost all the orders of terrestrial animals; for although a few of the human race might have escaped on the top of a mountain, or rather in some vessel like that of Noah, yet without supernatural interference either to direct the animals to the place of safety, or to give forewarning, that measures might be taken with due composure for securing at least a pair of each kind, they could not possibly have been saved. The atheist therefore is reduced to the dilemma of either renouncing the idea of a universal deluge in order to account for the *present state* of the world, or of admitting one of two things, which render his resorting to such an idea entirely needless; 1st, a supernatural direction of all the circumstances, or 2dly, a creation of animals after the catastrophe.—Without however prosecuting these speculations, it were easy to demonstrate that no deluge almost universal, or really so, like that which is recorded in Scripture, could possibly take place without the supernatural interference of an Almighty Agent, either to elevate for a time the bed of the ocean, and alter the inclination of the axis of the earth, or produce the requisite quantity of water and afterwards dispose of it by changing the structure of the globe.\*

We next appeal to the *defects of history*. If the world, in its present constitution, had not its commencement only some few thousand years ago, whence is it that the history of nations is so limited in its sphere of authentic record? It will be

\* BENTLEY in his *Confutation of Atheism* has shown not only that the idea of a deluge or succession of deluges is encumbered with various absurdities, as urged by the atheist, but that any deluge almost or completely universal, is utterly impossible without the supernatural interference of a Supreme Being. 1p. 108, 109.

admitted that there are tribes who to this day have no other method of perpetuating remarkable events but oral tradition and the rude monuments devised or reared to assist it ; but, on the supposition of the world's eternity, it cannot well be conceived how this should have been the state of the whole human race till within a few centuries of the Christian æra. It was about that time Herodotus flourished ; and although many records of antiquity were doubtless consumed in the ever to be deplored destruction of the Alexandrian library, about forty-seven years before Christ, yet as Herodotus had drawn up his details of ancient events long before that period, we must regard his history as a narrative of all that could be collected worthy of record. He was unable to go back a few ages, without being perplexed by contradictory traditions, and lost in the regions of fable ; and it is but a few ages he goes back even with such materials, to trace the origin and progress of the most civilized nations in the world. The history of Moses extends much farther, and is clear and decided. But then it commences with a creation of the heavens and the earth ; it proclaims our system to be the work of an Almighty Agent, and founds a chronology by which the date of the world, at least of its present constitution, cannot much exceed the four thousandth year before the coming of Christ. Set aside his writings and all the history of antiquity terminates in the mists of fiction, which soon settle into impenetrable darkness. If the world existed for countless ages, it will be difficult indeed to conceive how the Jews should be the only people who possessed the archives of mankind. And yet it deserves to be remarked, that all profane history, which can be deemed authentic, stops short far within the date which Moses has fixed, and that the very darkness in which it terminates accredits his account of the origin and dispersion of our race. This darkness either rests on a void which could supply no materials for history, owing to the uninhabited state of a great part of the world after the flood ; or it must have been occasioned by the paucity, the simplicity, and probably rude state of the first settlers, from whom the nations who afterwards figured in history derived their origin. The fragments of Manetho, accordingly, and of Sanchoniatho (who is supposed to have flourished in the days of Semiramis) are strongly corroborative of the sacred record. It was not to be expected that the nations who relinquished the pure religion of the patriarchs, would have much inducement to preserve the traditions of events which chiefly belonged to the history of that religion. Some of them, how-

ever, were too wonderful, and others too universally interesting, to be soon forgotten. Memorials of these accordingly may be found, not only in the fables from which authentic history usually takes its commencement, but in the traditions of the most unlettered tribes, and the extravagant superstitions of more cultivated nations. Neither was it to be expected that the heathen writers should know much about the Jews and their internal affairs. The most credible, however, acknowledge that Moses was the first Legislator. They style him "a wise man who first taught the Jews the use of letters,—a man celebrated for the greatness of his soul, and the regularity of his life,—who first persuaded the people to use written laws,—the Thoyth or Teut of the Egyptians,—the celebrated Hermes."

The Indian fables of the antiquity of the world, and the incarnations of Vishnou for an amazing succession of ages, are now consigned to their proper place by the reason and common sense of mankind. No sooner were we admitted to the presumed awful mysteries of Brahminical theology, than common sense was shocked, and after a few moments' contemplation, ridicule powerfully excited. In the temples of Hindostan was found no hieroglyphic worthy of interpretation by reason, much less calculated to impress the mind with a sort of intuitive evidence.—Similar must be the fate of the Chinese pretensions to antiquity. No formidable objection to the commonly received opinion about the origin of things can be founded on these. The high antiquity to which the empire of China lays claim is supported merely by its own annals or rather traditions, without vouchers in the histories of any other people, in its relations to neighbouring states, or in astronomical observations, without even any probable detail of events, justified by a specification of dates and of names. It must be attributed solely to that vanity for which the Chinese are so remarkable, their love of their country and veneration for their ancestors,—causes which operate to this day in producing a contempt for other nations and barring the way to improvement. But not only does their high claim exceed the limits of probability, it has been proved to be false. A remarkable conjunction of the sun, moon, and several stars is mentioned in their annals as having taken place at the commencement of authentic history. The celebrated astronomer Cassini, anxious to discover whether the period fixed by them could be verified, calculated back, found an error of nearly five hundred years, and proved to a demonstration that such a conjunction did take place, so as to be observed in China, in the fourth century after the flood, about



the time of the birth of Abraham. No nation presents a better claim to antiquity in their language, mode of writing, patriarchal government, simplicity of manners, and advanced state of civilization; but the table of Chinese dynasties constructed by Du Halde after due investigation, commences only with the year 2207 before Christ.

We might fix on the science of Astronomy, as of all others the most likely to afford indications of a greater antiquity of the world, than will consist with the Mosaic era, and thus to throw the mind loose for speculation on the probable eternity of the universe. It will be found, however, to confirm what has already been stated both under the head of *inventions* and under that of defective *chronology*. In the earliest ages of society, necessity, and then curiosity, would excite to a careful observation of the heavenly bodies. The rudest operations of husbandry, and the very occupations of the savage who acquires his subsistence by hunting or fishing, cannot well be carried on, without some attention to the revolution of the seasons, the approach and recession of the sun, the phases of the moon, and the positions of the stars. Some changes in the aspect of the heavens are so remarkable as almost to force themselves on the observation of mankind, such as eclipses of the sun or moon, the appearance of comets, the fiery brilliancy and magnitude of Mars when nearest our earth, &c. Yet it is certain, that owing to the want of proper instruments, and ignorance of the principles which suggest their construction, it is only of late that this science has been advanced to any thing like perfection. Was this to be expected on the supposition of a past eternity of the universe? Or will the atheist take refuge in the idea, that it is only of late that rational beings capable of studying the phenomena came into existence? Grant that it was some few thousands of years ago, how came they to be formed?—Again, even in the countries most favourable to the cultivation of astronomy, where the sky is usually serene and the climate temperate, we find no such series of observations, as might warrant the conclusion that the world had existed for a longer period than that which is fixed by the Mosaic era, much less such as might found a chronological computation in any respect friendly to the notion of eternal existence. We have historic notices of the progress of the Chaldeans, the Egyptians, and the Greeks, in the study of the heavens. But the most ancient authenticated facts in the Chaldean astronomy do not carry us beyond the eighth century before the Christian era. The book of Job, whatever be its date, may be considered as a monument



of antiquity, affording various hints of the state of oriental astronomy in Arabia during the age of the patriarch. But that age was at the utmost reckoning within the Mosaic era by 2000 years, a period sufficient for the advancement of the science to the state in which it is casually represented; and as some of the ideas, though most just, are so entirely peculiar to that book, that we find no traces, equally ancient, of their existence among other nations,—such as that of the earth's hanging upon nothing,—we cannot decide whether these were the results of scientific discussion, or simply the dictates of that inspiration to which the book lays claim. The fabulous boast of the Egyptians, who, according to Diodorus Laertius, pretended to have observed certain phenomena in the heavens for the space of 50,000 years, will gain no credit with enlightened men, who, however much they may revere the learning of Egypt, know the true age of its founder (also much within the Mosaic era) and are satisfied that the phenomena referred to, might all have occurred in the compass of ten or twelve centuries. As the Greeks derived their knowledge chiefly from the Egyptians, there can be no occasion for any remark on the state of astronomical science among them. We are told “that according to the Persian books there were formerly four bright stars which marked the four cardinal points in the heavens, and that it is a remarkable coincidence, in which chance could have no share, that about 3000 years before the Christian era, Aldebaran and Antares were situated exactly in the two equinoctial points, while Regulus and the Southern Fish were placed in the two solstices.” This fact, however, might not be that which is referred to in the Persian books, since these seem to mark some *permanent* appearance in the heavens,—a mere fanciful denotation of the four quarters of the world, during some supposed golden age, or preferable state of the system. Or, if the fact be referred to, since though but casual and temporary, it might be preserved by tradition, and might also in the course of tradition be connected with the idea we have mentioned,—yet it is a fact so obvious to common observation, and so apt to strike the senses, that it can give no indication of the state of the science, nor does it carry us beyond the Mosaic era. Fohi, the first emperor of China, is said to have computed astronomical tables 2752 years before Christ. But neither does this alleged antiquity of the Chinese astronomy disprove the late origin of the world. In fine, modern research has brought to light the astronomical tables of India;—but granting all that has been said in favour of their antiquity,—granting that the

epoch of the most ancient of these is not fictitious, and that they were not formed by retro-computation, but founded on real observation, whatever such concessions might imply against our chronology of the flood, or the universality of that catastrophe, the Mosaic era of creation is nowise affected. The Caly-yug coincides with the year 3102 before Christ. Between the date of creation and that period was an interval sufficient for all the progress supposed to be needful to the construction of these tables, especially if we admit the scripture accounts of the longevity of the antediluvians, with the fewness and simplicity of the principles of revealed religion, which left them much time for contemplating the works of God in the system of nature.

The last specified topic under indications of the late origin of the world was *certain appearances in nature*. The argument, indeed, has sometimes been constructed on principles, which accurate logic and sound philosophy refuse to admit. The brevity of human life, for example, does not seem to be reconcilable with the eternity of the world. There is evidently no proportion between the duration of the inhabitants, and that of the grand theatre on which they act, if the latter existed from eternity. But an atheist, imputing every thing to chance, will discard the idea of proportion, and till it be proved by facts of another description, might consider its previous assumption as a sort of begging the question. Neither can we reason from the apparent tendency of all things to decay, for this is rather disproved than substantiated by facts. The laws of generation and reproduction are as stable and uniform in their operation, as those of dissolution. A gradual decay of the light and power of the sun may be assumed by the poet for giving effect to some pathetic effusion, but no region of the world hath as yet felt the supposed disadvantage. Vegetation within the arctic circle, where the least diminution of the solar power would soon have been felt, is as rapid as ever it was. The temperature of the torrid zone rises to the same degrees as in former ages; higher degrees would have been insupportable by man, and yet from the date of the earliest accounts the oriental regions within the tropics have always been inhabited, and even famed for excess of population. When it is said in certain books, from which we may afterwards argue, that "the heavens shall wax old as a garment, and be changed as a vesture," the allusion seems to be to the alteration of fashions, and thus to the termination of the present use of the atmosphere and earth, not to a gradual decay of the system. Newton indeed has de-

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ence? Shall we deem it impossible, or even highly improbable, that the first human beings, with whom generation began, were the same in shape and organical structure with those who are now produced by the established process? The question with the atheist relates to creation, and those who hold the affirmative, can as easily suppose that trees and vegetables were formed at once in all their luxuriance, as that the impregnated seeds of these, or principles sufficient to generate such seeds, were originally dispersed in the soil. In like manner, till it shall be proved either that formations, such as appear in the present structure of the globe, could not be produced by the sudden combinations of creative power,—or that, even supposing a creation, it is highly improbable that the first constituted state of the earth would resemble what it presently is, comprising strata and minerals similar to those which may now result from chemical or physical action, and thus adapted to the laws which were afterwards to operate for the preservation of the system,—there is nothing to prevent us from holding that the present structure of the globe was originally determined and secondary, as well as primary mountains and strata formed at once, when the laws which are now in operation were established,—and from holding in addition to this, that no legitimate conclusion can be drawn even against the late origin of the world, from the incalculable period which might have been requisite to form its present structure by the processes now going on.\*

\* These statements on the late origin of the world, and the present structure of the globe, were made without reference to Organic Remains, and the geological theories founded on them, because at the time when the Essay was composed, neither had greatly attracted the attention of the public. However adverse to the Mosaic account some may suppose them to be, and whatever interpretation of Gen. i. 1, 2, they may require of those who hold it, they are clearly of no avail to the Atheist, who would still have to account for the origination both of the animals indicated by the fossil remains, and of the present state of the world with its inhabitants.

The statements are retained, without entering into the geological question, 1st, Because the sceptic is not entitled, on his principles, to assume that the world ever was different from what it presently is as to physical structure and inhabitants, without specifying the natural causes which could give rise to its present state,—which the demonstrative part of the essay undertakes to shew is impossible. The Theist can readily account for Organic Remains, and all other appearances; and will only find some difficulty in admitting that the Deity proceeded by a series of *tentamina* in bringing his work to its present state of perfection, as seems to be suggested by the geological enumeration of prior states of the world. From this idea, apparently so unworthy of the wisdom and power of God, the Christian Theist is relieved by analogical reasoning on the Mosaic account. For if prior states of the world must be admitted, the Deity, in the formation of these, may have acted just

How inadequate are the laws of men for the purposes even of civil government, and the blessings of an effective morality “foundations of the earth” from being of “their course,” so as to endanger civil constitutions, and of the whole well-regulated society? May not corrupt tribunals of justice? and have not arisen, who have not only set at defiance, but trampled on the more general compact which constitute the law of God? think of the pride, the ambition, the the mistaken notions of liberty, which human provisions for the peace and order retrace the great public commotions in propensities have been so fearfully developed we ascribe the prevention of universal

as he did in bringing the world to its present state on account of a six days' *gradual* process.—with this each of the alleged prior states had been allowed time, he was pleased to annul it, that it might be superior. However long the intervening chaotic state i. 2, might continue, there is still recognised the Supreme Being acting according to his pleasure.

The statements are retained, 2d, As serving the Mosaic accounts relative to the present constitution is apt to be weakened in some minds, unnecessary,—and which scepticism

unseen Power who hath hitherto “upheld the pillars of the world?”

Do criminals elude the vigilance of law? Nothing is more common than to solace ourselves with the thought that justice will not suffer them entirely to escape. If at any time a tyrant arises, who is placed beyond the reach of law, and whom success in arms seems to secure from the humiliation and punishment he deserves; do we not trust, that notwithstanding his triumphs he will meet with his doom, and that the secular evils produced by his domination will sooner or later be undone? Whence this confidence? Why are these hopes so universal? Is it not because the facts which have fallen under the observation of mankind, and are recorded in history, or perpetuated by tradition, are so numerous, and so striking, that they have been deemed sufficient not merely to suggest, but even prove and confirm the grand proposition “that an all-controlling justice exists?” If there be exceptions, these only serve to shew that this justice is not invariable in its operations, like the laws of nature, but voluntary; and therefore the attribute of a wise and active Governor, who, while he leaves room for a due development of the moral qualities of his subjects, at the same time accommodates his procedure to their ever-varying state, and delights to display his supreme control over every species of evil by frequently bringing “order out of confusion.”

Amidst all the inequalities, which must be supposed to obscure to a certain degree the evidence arising from facts, so plain are the traces of retribution, and so numerous the instances in which it has been marked, that the monitory saying has become familiar almost to every people, “you may read the sin in the punishment.” To detail the many well authenticated cases in which a singular concurrence of circumstances has led to the detection of criminals, would not be expedient, otherwise indications of the agency of a Supreme Ruler, as convincing as can reasonably be expected on this head of evidence, might easily be adduced. Who has not reflected on the manner in which concealed murders, and other enormous crimes, have been brought to light,—on the confessions of those, who, while they protested their innocence of the crimes for which they were condemned, have yet declared themselves malefactors who in justice deserved to die,—on the diseases connected with certain vices, the calamities which have pursued the oppressors of the poor, the curse which has visibly entered into the house of the thief and consumed all his ill-gotten wealth? These,

and a thousand similar facts, might induce the most atheistical sceptic at least to presume "that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth."—The historians of nations are usually more occupied in tracing the political concatenation of events, than in marking their moral relations ; but every one has it in his power, by examining their statements, to increase, on a still grander scale, the mass of presumptive evidence under this department.

## SECT. II.

### DEMONSTRATION OF A FIRST CAUSE.

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By a First Cause is meant not simply an *original* cause, some power or agent who brought all things into being, but also an *ultimate* cause to whom all present phenomena must be traced, whatever secondary means or causes be employed, and who though the last at whom we arrive by induction, is the first in the order of operation.

The term Demonstration is not to be understood strictly in a mathematical sense, nor even of a dependent chain of logical reasonings all tending to one conclusion which is not made out till the process is completed, but of a series of propositions supported by appropriate arguments, and many of them singly conclusive. Taken together they form a system of proof wholly irresistible.

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The following principles, which are either axioms, or will be admitted as soon as explained, are the basis of all reasoning on this part of the subject.

1. *Ex nihilo nihil fit* ;—that is nothing can never give being to something, or something can never spontaneously spring from nothing.—This axiom cannot be opposed to the operation of an Almighty power in producing that which did not exist before, for in this case a previously existing and sufficient cause is supposed.

2. A thing cannot in the same instance be both cause and effect ;—or in other words, the cause of itself. This would imply activity prior to the subject in which it existed.

3. That which is contingent must have had a cause. To



affirm the contrary would be to assert that it may be both necessarily existent and contingent, which is absurd.

4. That is contingent which either might not have been at all, or might have been different from what it is with regard to qualities, without implying any contradiction.

5. There can be no physical law of origination. Without matter as a previously existing subject, physical laws of every description are clearly nonentities. We may add, that the existence of such a law is disproved by fact. Laws of change, and of generation or reproduction, there are, but all these suppose the existence of matter, and of matter not in one form in which the causal property may act, but frequently in others on whom the cause may operate to the production of the effect. If there were law of origination with regard to matter, or an absolute necessity for its coming into existence, that law would continue to operate for ever, unless subject to the control or veto of some all-powerful intelligent being, to admit whom would be to supersede all need of recourse to the law; and if it continue in uncontrolled operation, then all space must long ere now have been filled, or new systems would still be starting into being, to the perturbation and consequent dissolution of the present arrangement of the universe.

These principles may facilitate the establishment of the following propositions.

I.—Something must have been eternal. Upon the axiom that nothing can never produce something, or that something can never spring from nothing, it must be admitted on all hands that something did exist from eternity.

II.—The idea that space is a homogeneous body, and therefore an infinite *being* existing from eternity, is palpably false; since space is merely vacuum, and assumes the definite idea of space only as marking the relations of distance and magnitude among existing beings. Abstract from them, it is pure non-entity; and therefore, by the maxim, could not be the cause of the material bodies which now occupy it.\*

III.—The Something that existed from eternity must have been Necessarily existent. “To suppose an eternal succes-

\* See on the idea of Space a Dissertation in the manner, and style also, of Cicero, entitled “*De finibus Mundi.*”—WEBERFELSH *Opusc.* 4to.

sion of merely dependant beings proceeding one from another in endless progression, without any original and independent cause at all, is to suppose that things which have in their own nature no necessity of existence were from eternity, which is the same absurdity and express contradiction as to suppose them produced by nothing at any determinate period. That which existed from eternity must therefore have been an independent and unchangeable being, and by consequence self-existent or necessarily existing.\*

IV.—That which is self-existent must be “infinite, uniform, simple, indivisible, and incorruptible.” for otherwise it might have been different from what it is, or might not have been at all; that is, it would be either wholly or partially contingent, which involves a contradiction.

V.—It must have been “but one,”—for to suppose two or more independent and infinite beings is also an express contradiction.†

## MATTER.

VI.—Matter cannot possibly be the something that existed from eternity.

Since its permanent properties are so few, and by these its perfection so limited, even in regard to the ideas which may be formed of possible perfection from the facts of intelligence, volition, &c., it must be unreasonable to suppose that it possesses the first, the greatest, and most wonderful of all properties, Self-existence. But that it does, is clearly disproved by the very complexion of its distinctive and permanent properties; for according to Prop. iv. and v. Self-existence is necessarily connected with the highest kind of physical perfection, characterised by simplicity, infinitude, indivisibility, &c.,—of which

\* Nearly the same argument is thus presented by a great master of eloquence, “An eternal succession of finite beings involves in it a contradiction, and is therefore plainly impossible. As the supposition is made to get quit of the idea of any one having existed from eternity, each of the beings in the succession must have begun in time; but the succession itself is eternal. We have then the succession of beings infinitely earlier than any being in the succession; or in other words, a series of beings running on, *ad infinitum*, before it reached any particular being, which is absurd.”

HALL'S *Serm. on Infidelity*.

† On these three propositions marked with the signs of quotation, see DR. CLARKE'S *Demonstration of the being and attributes of God*.

matter is evidently devoid, and to which its real properties are directly opposed.

Other considerations might be urged.—Self-existence is not intuitively one of the properties of matter; and as its claim to this high degree of perfection cannot be ascertained by the senses, which alone inform us of its real properties, so there is no argument in support of the claim from any thing ascertained by the senses. If there were, it must be founded on the indestructibility of matter, as this is the only property which can at all be supposed to bear on the subject. But the Atheist is not at liberty to assume, that in some form or another, matter is absolutely indestructible, as the medium of disproving the being of a God. He must first prove that even on the supposition of a divine power, annihilation is impossible, since by our hypothesis he who made any substance, must be able to destroy it,—he who called it into being, could if he pleased as easily reduce it to nothing. The assumption of absolute indestructibility is a *petitio principii*, a begging the question. But granting that without such a power, matter is really indestructible, this will not prove that it is necessarily existent; for if it be so, it must have this high character, either in all its parts, or only in mass. If it be necessarily existent in all its parts, then there are more independent beings than one; if only in mass, still, as it is confessedly divisible, the one independent being will not be simple and invariable, but capable of change and even of multiplication *ad infinitum*. Again, it will not be pretended that the souls of men are self-existent and absolutely eternal, that is without commencement as well as termination of being. Suppose with the Atheist that these are material, they prove that self-existence is not an essential property of matter. Grant them to be spirits (as may afterwards be proved), reason reclaims against ascribing to gross matter a higher property than belongs even to spirit, and a property which must necessarily imply that matter gives being to spirit.

VII.—As the matter of the universe was not eternal as a self-existent being, so it could not make itself.

There is, we have seen, no physical law of origination. And upon the maxim, that nothing can proceed from nothing, it is impossible that matter could at any determinate period start into being. Then, to say that it made itself is absurd, since this would not only imply activity, which is none of its essential properties, but the existence of the property prior to the subject, an activity producing the very thing in which it resides,

and without which it could neither exist nor operate. In fine, it involves no contradiction to suppose that matter might never have existed at all ; it is therefore contingent, and must have had a cause, (Prin. 3, 4.), which could not be in itself, since this is inconsistent with the very idea of its being contingent, and must therefore have been without it,—a cause distinct from it, and adequate to its production in all its amplitude and variety of modes.

## THE FORM OF THE UNIVERSE.

VIII.—Granting (*ex abundanti*) that matter had been eternal, or had somehow or other come into being, subject to physical laws,—the present form of the universe could neither have been spontaneously assumed by matter, nor produced by the operation of these laws.

The present forms of matter are not essential to it, for its characteristic properties are simply extension, solidity, divisibility, mobility, inactivity, repulsion, and gravity, or more generally attraction. We argue then, that without implying any contradiction, the form of the universe might have been different from what it presently is, since there was no necessity arising from the properties of matter, for its having precisely that form, and no other, which we discern in its several parts, or in the combination and arrangement of the whole. It follows, that the present form of the universe is contingent. It must therefore have had a cause without itself. This cause again must have been either necessarily existent, or contingent. If the former, the point at issue is decided ; if the latter, the reasoning is only protracted a little,—for since a contingent cause must itself have had a previous cause ; and since an infinite series of contingent causes is absurd, we land at last either in the idea that something was produced by nothing, which is also absurd, or in the existence of an independent and necessary Being.

To complete the argument, subjoin to these metaphysical deductions, the reasoning of Sir Isaac Newton, on the possible effect of physical laws.\* Since the form of the universe is contingent and requires a necessary cause, that cause cannot be found in any of the laws of nature. To give rise to these, matter must be supposed already in existence, and, prior to its present forms, diffused. If the space through which its

\* *Four Letters to Dr. Bentley on the argument for a Deity.*

particles were diffused was *finite*, then “all the matter on the outside would by its innate gravity tend to all the matter on the inside, and by consequence fall down into the middle, and there compose one great spherical mass.” In order to this, however, it would have been farther requisite, “that a central particle should have been so inaccurately placed, as to be always,” even during the coalescence, “equally attracted on all sides, and thereby continue without motion,” a thing hardly conceivable without the disposition of a voluntary agent and divine power. “The fixing of such a central particle,” says Sir Isaac, “appears to me fully as hard as to make the sharpest needle stand upright upon its point on a looking-glass,—for if the very mathematical centre of the central particle were not in the very mathematical centre of the attractive power of the whole mass, the particle could not be attracted equally on all sides.” But supposing a particle so placed, only one mass, not such a multitude and diversity of bodies, and at such distances, as constitute the present system of the universe, would have been formed. If, on the other hand, the space was *infinite*,—granting the application of that term to dimension without bounds to be just and conceivable, which a mind nowise disposed to scepticism may yet be allowed to doubt,—then, a different effect would have followed, according as the particles of matter were either evenly diffused or not.—“If *evenly* diffused, that is, if every particle was so placed as equally to attract all the rest, then they would never have coalesced,”—their gravity would have kept them where they were. Even to admit that all the particles could be so accurately poised by chance in infinite space, as to stand still in perfect equilibrium, is more than can be demanded of reason: “this,” says Sir Isaac, “I reckon as hard as to make not one needle only, but an infinite number of them stand accurately poised on their points: The thing may be possible, at least to a divine power, but if they were once poised so accurately, they would continue in that position without motion or approximation for ever, unless” the equilibrium were destroyed, and they were “put into motion by the same power.”—If the particles were *not evenly* diffused, then they “would have convened not into one mass, but some into one, some into another, so as to make an infinite number of great masses, scattered at great distances from one another throughout all that infinite space.”

This last, therefore, is the only supposition on which an atheist can pretend to account for the contingent formation of the sun, the earth, the stars, and all the system of nature. The

idea of finite space will not serve his hypothesis, for then only one mass could have been formed. He must resort to infinite space. Then in the particles diffused throughout it he must deny equilibrium,—for the distribution of matter in an equal poise throughout infinite space, must either have been owing to the voluntary agency of some almighty power, or it must have been eternal. To resort to the former is to admit a Creator, and he indeed, (whether the space were finite or infinite,) might so balance the particles of matter as to form a temporary chaos, prior to the forms and arrangement presently existing. If again the equal distribution of matter was eternal, it would have remained to eternity; the particles would never have convened without the interference of some cause beginning to act as it had never acted before,—that is, without the voluntary agency of some external Power.

Shall then the idea of infinite space be retained, and that of equilibrium among the particles of matter be denied, in order to account for the formation of different masses?—the supposition is both inadmissible, and still fails to explain the present structure of the universe.

*First*, it is inadmissible, for if matter not being equally diffused coalesced into masses throughout infinite space, these masses must have been infinite in number, and as they must at the same time have been fewer than the original particles, it would follow that of two numbers, both infinite, the one might be less than the other, which is absurd.—But to pass this together with the idea of an infinite space filled with particles, or atoms, each divisible *ad infinitum*!—the consummation of the argument is,

*Secondly*, That the hypothesis, whatever justice be done it, and howsoever much be conceded in its favour, still fails to account for the present structure of the universe. Matter unequally disposed through infinite space would convene into globular masses, but 1st, No law of attraction would “divide it into two sorts, and make that part of it which is fit for composing a lucid body fall down into one mass, so as to constitute a sun, while the rest should coalesce into opaque bodies.”

2. No law, or essential property of matter, would “make the lucid bodies larger than all the opaque ones around them, fit to occupy the centre of their respective systems, or place them there.”

3. The very laws of attraction, chemical or physical, would have prevented the existence of such a system as we now see. Chemical attractions, unless the subjects of them had existed

in a diversity of kind among the diffused particles, would never have been called into being or operation; and on the other supposition would have interfered with the attraction of gravitation during the time of concourse, producing explosions, and changing in many instances the gravity of the descending particles so as to have long retarded the conglobation, if they had not occasioned absolute and endless confusion.\*

## MOTION.

IX. Motion in the different departments of the universe, could neither be eternal nor self-produced, and must therefore indicate a Great First Cause.

If matter be not eternal, much less motion which is but its adjunct. But supposing the eternity of matter, motion is not essential to it, since it may be produced or destroyed at the pleasure of free agents, who have no control over the essential properties of matter; and conceding not only the eternity of matter, but even of the present form of the universe, still the phenomena of motion in the different systems of which it is composed, must be traced to an exterior cause,—the impulse of a moving agent adequate to the effect, and distinct from the subject moved.

\* It is to be regretted that the Letters of Sir Isaac Newton, from which these extracts are given, labour under considerable disadvantage from a certain degree of confusion, which has perhaps prevented their obtaining that notice and respect, to which not only the name of the author, but the force of his reasoning are entitled. He had set out in his replies to Dr. Bentley's queries, with the alternative only of finite and infinite space, and though he evidently took for granted a want of equilibrium, in reasoning on the diffusion of matter throughout finite space, he had inadvertently supposed it "evenly spread" throughout infinite space, and affirmed that even in this case it would coalesce into *distinct masses*. On reconsidering the subject he stated in his second letter that "when he said matter evenly spread throughout all space would convene into one or more great masses," he understood it "of matter not resting in an accurate poise," that is not evenly spread. An attempt has been made to remove the confusion which this inadvertency occasioned, and to reduce the argument to order, by transferring part of his first letter to the proper stage to which the argument is brought in the third, and inserting such steps as were wanting to complete the process of induction. The very apology which Newton has made for his inadvertency, deserves our attention. "The hypothesis of deriving the frame of the world by mechanical principles from matter evenly spread through the heavens *being inconsistent with my system*, I had considered it very little before your letter put me upon it, and therefore trouble you with a line or two more about it," &c.

For a confutation of the idea that the world might be formed by vortices, or by the fortuitous concourse of atoms, the reader who deems it necessary, is referred to Bentley's Sermons at Boyle's Lecture; p. 248 and 265.



There are four ways in which motion may be conceived to arise; from chemical action,—from some of the auræ, magnetic, galvanic or electric,—from gravitation,—or from impulse.—

1. *Chemical action* could have no place in the original formation of the worlds, since the atoms or monads must have been simple and diffused, scattered at astonishing distances from each other. Contact, collision, or mixture, is requisite to the production of motion by chemical action; and all these imply previous motion not accounted for by the supposed process. Then the result would not have been, the formation of bodies in all respects similar to those now revolving around their centres, nor the origination of such motion as presents itself in the course of the planets, but merely some species of fermentation, combustion, or other change of the subject acted upon; which, again, could not have been permanent, since the materials would either have been dissipated or converted into a new substance equally inert with that in which the motion was first excited. Let us even conceive with Darwin, who has laboured to support the hypothesis, that an enormous central mass was split by chemical action, and that by successive explosions the planets, of which our system is composed, were thrown out to their respective distances, according to their specific gravities, still, (to say nothing of the difference of density which remains unexplained by the hypothesis,) this projectile force could never have originated the motion by which they are guided and preserved in their courses. 2. Of the *auræ*, it may be doubted whether magnetism acts beyond the surface of the globe, or has any existence in other orbs; but neither the laws by which it operates, nor those of electricity and galvanism, have the smallest relation to the motions of the heavenly bodies, not even of comets, which some suppose highly electric, but on the contrary tend rather to retard, suspend, or disturb them. 3. We must therefore resort to *gravitation*, and consider whether this, without the fourth mentioned source of motion, an original *impulse* be sufficient to account for them.

In general we may remark that since gravitation may regulate motions which it cannot produce, the adaptation of the subjects of these motions in density, distance, &c. to the laws of gravitation will by no means prove that their motion proceeded from it, but rather that they were constructed and arranged by some great Intelligent Agent, who designed them to be regulated by the laws of gravitation, whether it be deemed a principle essential to matter, or the result of voluntary power.—But not to anticipate,



1. We have already seen that if the particles of matter were originally diffused in equal poise, they would have remained in that state by the power of universal attraction for ever, unless some other power had interfered. The only other alternative, that the particles were not diffused in equal poise, must be absurd on the supposition that gravity is essential, for then matter must have existed in mass from eternity, and without the interference of some adequate agent could never have been diffused. But granting its unequal diffusion, still by the law of gravitation it must have coalesced, and as soon as the coalescence had taken place, whether into one or many masses, all the motion generated by gravitation must thenceforward have ceased.

2. Admitting that the planets had disposed themselves at their present distances, still the transverse motion by which they are impelled in tangents to their orbits, could not possibly arise from gravitation, which ever attracts them to the centre. Wherever they were formed, whether above or below or in the very orbits in which they presently revolve, they must have descended by the power of gravity, and continued their descent till they had fallen down upon the sun, unless some other power had turned them aside into their respective orbits with a horizontal impulse sufficient to counteract but not destroy the force of the central attraction.\*

3. Had the velocities of the several planets been greater or less than they are now, at the same distances from the sun, or had their distances or the quantity of matter in the centre, and consequently its attractive power, been greater or less than they are, with the same velocities,—they would not have revolved in concentric circles, but have moved in hyperbolas or in ellipses very eccentric. The same may be said of the

\* Gravitation would have prevented the planets from occupying the place which they hold in relation to their centres, "without the interference of a divine arm to impress them according to the tangents of their orbits." See ISAAC NEWTON'S *Letters*. *Let.* 3.

"It is the compound motion which arises from gravitation and projection, that describes the present revolutions of the primary planets about the sun, and of the secondary (or moons) about the primary, gravity prohibiting that they cannot recede from the centres of their motions, and the transverse impulse withholding that they cannot approach them. This last can only be ascribed to an omnipotent arm." BENTLEY'S *Confutation of Atheism*.

The centrifugal force has no application to the motions of the planets, though supposed by some to account for the figure of the earth. It merely denotes the tendency of the particles of a fluid or semi-fluid body, spinning on its axis, to fly off from the centre, and therefore, supposes a mass, and that mass already in motion.

secondary planets, with regard to their distances from the centres of their orbs and the quantity of matter in the central bodies.\* To produce the present effect, therefore, not only an impulse beyond the sphere of gravitation and all natural causes, but a *determinate* impulse was requisite,—such as might give to the moved bodies a velocity proportioned to their distances from the centre and the quantity of central matter. This must be ascribed to a cause, at once Intelligent and Omnipotent. And so must be,

4. The rapid diurnal rotation of the primary planets on their axes. That this motion is neither the result of gravitation, nor of a whirl produced by explosion, is evident from its having no place in the moon, which always presents the same face or hemisphere to our world, and also from the different degrees of its velocity in the several planets, which, though invariable, clearly depend upon no law of proportion with regard to size, density, or distance.†

5. With respect to gravitation itself, it has been demonstrated by Newton,—that every particle of matter in the uni-

\* BENTLEY'S *Confutation*.

† NEWTON has shown in his second letter that “the diurnal rotations of the planets could not be derived from gravity, but required a divine arm to impress them.” BURROW supposes that the planets were struck off from the sun's surface by the impact of a large comet, which might occasion both their annual revolution and diurnal rotation; but he forgot that comets are connected with our system as a sort of planets themselves, which move in very eccentric orbits, and that therefore it might be asked what had previously struck off the comets from the body of the sun, and how came they to want the rotatory motion? Besides, the formation of the secondary planets would still remain to be explained, with the difference between them and their primaries. The impact of a comet, instead of separating moons, would probably have destroyed the planet on which it struck. DARWIN, while he discards this hypothesis, conceives that the planets were ejected from the sun by explosion, and attempts to account for their motions on the principle, that “they must have parted from the sun's surface with the velocity with which that surface was moving, and with the velocity acquired by the explosion,” adding that “as their diurnal revolutions would depend on one side of the exploded matter adhering more than the other, at the time it was torn off by the explosion, so these would differ in the different planets, and not bear any proportion to their annual periods.” (*Bot. Ger.* vol. i. note xv.) In this hypothesis, however, two previous motions are assumed,—a progressive motion of the sun round some distant centre, and a rotation of his orb on its axis. What was the cause of these? They are motions of the same kind with those of the planets, and if they were absolutely requisite to produce the latter, similar motions must have been requisite to produce them; and since the previous motions would still be unexplained though we should go on *ad infinitum* with a series of explosions of still larger and larger central masses, to avoid the absurdity, we may as well at once recognise a great First Cause exterior to matter, and independent on motion.

verse doth attract, and is attracted by, all the rest,—that this universal attraction on every side, is an incessant, uniform, and regular action by certain laws according to the quantity of matter and longitude of distance,—and that it can neither be destroyed, impaired nor augmented by any thing, by motion, rest, position, alteration of form, or diversity of medium. But the operation of distant bodies upon each other without contact, effluvia, or corporeal medium, as it differs from every other characteristic of matter, cannot possibly arise from any of the properties essentially requisite to its existence as matter distinguished from spirit. This attraction therefore must either have been originally impressed upon it by some exterior power, or, which is equally good in the argument, it must be regarded as the constant agency of such a Power preserving the Unity and Symmetry of the whole universe, and steadily conducting the motions of its several parts.

#### THE LAWS OF NATURE.

X.—This phrase is applied to certain connexions of things, which being invariable suggest the idea of Cause in that which precedes, and of Effect in that which follows. Many of them have subordinate laws, according to which the specialities of the effect in regard to proportion, form, extent, &c., are regulated, as might easily be shown by enumerating the theorems on the head of gravitation, or the laws of chemical attraction. But none of them exclude the operation of a creative power.

They are all calculated only to uphold the *existing* order of things,—to preserve the various forms of matter, to reproduce what is decomposed, or to indicate the results of combination,—presenting such standards of uniform action in their several departments, as may enable man to prosecute the science of nature with success, or to apply with certainty the materials around him to the purposes of art and of life. As they do not produce, but presuppose the existence both of matter and of the special properties which discriminate its various forms, they leave room for the operation of a creative power in the production of the one and the constitution of the other. But for the acting of this power they could have had no sphere of existence. Whence is it, that the gases which exhibit matter in the simplest state, are so limited in number? and that the permanent quality of each is so decidedly marked? To what is it owing, that the crystals of the various salts do not assume the same

uniform appearance, but have each their invariably distinctive characters? These, and a thousand similar questions might be proposed. If the facts cannot be ascribed to any of the essential properties of matter, then the free determination of it to these forms and no other, was the act which fixed the laws, and the Act of a Power which established their operation for ever, unless suspended, altered, or annulled by some new interposition. The laws of nature are thus existing phenomena which come under the idea of effects in relation to a Primary Cause.\*

XI.—These Laws are of such a nature as must supersede the necessity of ascending beyond their Cause to another.

They confessedly include all the relations beyond subordinate cause and effect in the universe. Their cause therefore must be regarded as the First.

XII.—Even in the sphere of their operation, they leave room for the *permanent agency* of a First Cause, and necessarily require it.

They are descriptive of certain connexions of things, so uniform and invariable, that the antecedent is denominated the cause, and the consequent the effect; but they give us no idea of the manner in which the effect follows the cause. There is a chasm here, which gives place for the permanent operation of a divine power,—a chasm which nothing but an almighty agency can fill. The law is established, but it requires a power distinct both from itself and its subject to uphold its operation, and in fact produce the phenomena.

XIII.—These Laws farther require a *previous disposal* of

\* Could it be owing to any of the common properties of matter that this attraction which combines and changes different substances should not act at a distance, like that of gravitation, electricity or magnetism? Or that the particles of one metal should cleave together with firmer cohesion than those of another? Or that a body apparently of the same density with another should be lighter,—that *potassium*, for example, which seems to possess the properties of a metal, and nearly resembles quicksilver in its fluid state, should yet differ so much in specific gravity from all metals, and particularly from that to which it bears so great a similarity? The final cause in all these cases may be sufficiently obvious. Did potassium possess the ponderosity of quicksilver, it would be very unfit for its province in the economy of vegetation. Without different degrees of cohesion, that diversity of metals which is adapted to the different purposes of art could not exist. And so on. But the First Cause of these phenomena is not to be found in Nature.

their subjects, to prevent the dreadful consequences which in certain arrangements would infallibly ensue.

The atheist will not admit the constant interference of another power acting beside or beyond these laws, to prevent such consequences, neither can the theist (though he may allow occasional miracles for particular purposes,) resort to this idea, since it is utterly inconsistent with the very supposition that laws have been established.—The invariable connexions which give rise to the idea of cause and effect, on whatsoever they depend and howsoever upheld, certainly exist. And these are such, whether chemical or physical, that were their subjects otherwise disposed, the harmony of nature would soon be destroyed, the world turned upside down, and anarchy produced throughout the wide extent of the universe. If such would be the effect of the existing laws, were the present arrangement changed by some means or other, we must conclude that without a previous disposal of their subjects, they would have prevented the present form of the universe. Now a previous arrangement establishing a system of order which these laws should tend to uphold rather than destroy, and by which their operation should be properly controlled, implies a previous agent,—a power superior to the laws, able to counteract or suspend their operation wherever it would have interfered, till the arrangement which should render them beneficial was made.

**XIV.**—There are many phenomena for which both chemical and physical laws fail to account, and which therefore indicate still more clearly the permanent agency of a Great First Cause.

These phenomena are constant and uniform, pertaining to what the Scriptures denominate “the ordinances of heaven,” or more generally to the constituted order of nature, and therefore are not to be classed with miraculous effects, in which there is always a deviation from that order, and most commonly a suspension of physical laws, or something produced beyond their power and at the same time not within the sphere of the uniformity referred to. The very constitution of the order of nature indicates, as we have seen, an agent distinct from matter possessed of power to arrange and diversify it. We are now to consider the manner in which that order exists and is upheld, in relation to some of the phenomena which might be conceived to be within the sphere of physical laws. And when we say that these laws fail to account for the facts, we do not mean

that they are utterly excluded, for in many instances (as in the process of vegetation for example) they may have their place, while the proposition remains in full force. At the same time, it is stated in moderate terms, since facts occur in which the law which operates in all other cases seems to be uniformly controlled, if not counteracted. To prevent confusion, it may be proper to remark farther, that the uniformity of the facts gives room for certain determinations about them which may be called Laws, (as for example light has its own laws) but these are different from what is usually meant by the term, and signify nothing more than certain theorems relative to the properties, &c., of what has been constantly found to take place.

1. If light be matter, the atheist has no means of accounting for its diffusion, or even explaining its phenomena. Suppose that light gravitates, and that the sun and fixed stars, instead of being the sources of it, are in reality centres to which it is attracted from all points ;—then, a power distinct from, and superior to, the laws of nature, must be recognised, 1st, Constituting, in some inexplicable way, the sun and fixed stars centres of attraction to the matter of light, and preventing it from being disturbed in its course by those large bodies called planets, which since they are not luminous constantly, and on every side, cannot be so at all by attraction ; 2dly, Continually producing the matter of light, for if it descend to the respective centres, it must remain there by the power of gravitation, and either rest on the central body, or circulate around it ; 3dly, Somehow in certain proportions disposing of the luminous matter at the centre, that the magnitude of the central body be not increased. Suppose, on the other hand, that instead of tending to a centre, light diverges in every direction from the sun and fixed stars, what occasioned and constantly sustains the projectile force by which its particles are emitted and move at the amazing rate of 200,000 miles in a second ? What secured the effect of continuous illumination, by the velocity and rapid succession of these particles (480 issuing in a minute), though it has been calculated that they are 24,000 miles asunder ? And by what is the waste replenished ? Finally, let it be admitted as ascertained by experiment, that *lucine* or the base of light exists, and acts even in darkness, and let us suppose that light is only a certain form given to the particles of *lucine* diffused throughout the universe ; still, that the sun and fixed stars should have the power of exciting these particles, or so acting upon them as to make them become visible and produce light, must be owing to some primary cause, since the power is

evidently denied to other bodies in the heavens, and cannot result from the essential properties of matter, or from any law connected with these. On every view, the existence, perpetuity, and wondrous peculiarities of light, must be traced to an Almighty agent who could say "Let it be," and it was.

2. There are in the universe, vast groups of stars, which have been denominated *nebulae*, some of them much greater than the milky way, which is seen by the naked eye, from our world, stretching over an immense region of the heavens. By what law shall we account for the decomposition of some of the larger of these, from which, according to the observations of Dr. Herschell, lesser *nebulae* are detaching themselves?

3. The fixed stars have no real motion peculiar to themselves. Their apparent motion is entirely owing to the rotation of the globe we inhabit; for such is the immensity of their distance, that the annual revolution of the earth does not sensibly affect their position, to the eye of the observer. Besides the apparent motion, another has been detected styled by astronomers their proper motion; but this is also supposed to arise from a progressive motion of our system towards one quarter of the heavens,—the constellation Hercules. If this be the case, then the motion of our sun with the planets around him will be either rectilinear or curved. Suppose it rectilinear, whence is it that the law of gravitation does not subject him to the attraction of other heavenly bodies, among which his path is directed? Say with Dr. Herschell that the motion is in a curved line, and belongs to the revolution of our whole system round some distant centre; we ask,—not where is the attractive force capable of producing such an effect? for its existence is possible enough,—but why are the other fixed stars exempted from the law? We see them collected in groups, we discover vast multitudes of them in the milky way, but we detect no real change of position.

4. Beyond the limits of our system, in the region of the fixed stars, and therefore classed with them, are certain variable stars,—some of which have appeared for a time and then vanished, others have been gradually increasing in brilliancy, and others constantly diminishing, while a great number exhibit a periodical change in their splendour. Any one who looks into the astronomical table of new and variable stars, must be satisfied that the principle of gravitation cannot account for all the appearances they exhibit—that some of these appearances indicate their being subject to peculiar laws,—and that they belong to a constituted order different from that which appears in our



system, and therefore in our reckoning, though not in fact, more immediately dependant on the almighty fiat of a Great First Cause.\*

5. The position of the stars is widely different from that which the common laws of nature would lead us to expect. "It appears that if there were but one vast sun in the universe, and all the other globes were, like planets, revolving around him in concentric orbs at convenient distances, such a system would very long endure of itself, could it but naturally have a principle of attraction, and be once actually put into motion. But the frame of the universe hath a very different structure. It presents a vast multitude of suns or fixed stars, all which being made up of the same common matter, must be supposed to be equally endued with a power of gravitation. For if all have not such a power, what is it that could make that difference between bodies of the same sort? Nothing but a Deity. And if they have the power, since they are neither revolved about a common centre in concentric circles, or elliptic orbits, nor have any transverse impulse in one direction or another, what restrains them from approaching one another as their gravitating power incites them? What is it that keeps them in fixed stations and intervals, against an incessant and inherent tendency to desert them? Why do not the groups of stars coalesce? Must we not think here of an Almighty agent "who commanded and they were created; who hath also established them for ever; and made a decree which they shall not pass?"† By him "all things consist."

\* The new star discovered in 1572 suddenly became brighter than Venus, and was visible in the meridian even in the daytime. Its light then began gradually to diminish, till it disappeared, sixteen months after it was first seen. Another star, in a different part of the heavens, exhibited a similar appearance in 1603, and vanished after being visible some months. May not these and the periodical changes in other stars be owing to translation in absolute space? If so their motion will be rectilinear; they come into view by descent in the direction of our system, and disappear by retiring in the same path. But this is not agreeable to any law known to us. Some have supposed them flattened bodies, increasing in splendour, and again diminishing in proportion to the surface presented by rotation on their axis. (Brewster's *Encycl.—Astronomy*.) But neither the formation of such a body, nor its rotation in such a form, are reconcilable with the laws which operate in our system.—"A new star was discovered by Anthelme, in June 1670, in the Swan's head, when it was of the third magnitude. On the 10th August it was of the fifth magnitude. Hevelius discovered it in 1671 and 1672, of the sixth magnitude; but it has not since been seen. Nearly in the breast of the Swan, is a star which continues at its full brightness five years, decreases rapidly during two years, is invisible to the naked eye during four years, and increases slowly during seven."—*Encycl. ib.*

† BENTLEY'S *Sermons against Atheism*.



6. And now to come nearer home, and take one example from the sphere of chemical as well as physical laws,—although vegetable life and irritability depend on a certain configuration of parts, by which the requisite processes are carried on, it were easy to shew that such configuration could not result necessarily from any of the common properties of matter; that supposing it existent, and supposing capillary attraction, to which it is adapted, to be all that is requisite for carrying on the processes referred to; still, since the interior configuration is uniform, and since the *pabulum* or food of all plants is the same, in the first place, the determination of each plant to take up and absorb certain proportions of the moisture, the salts, gases, &c., which constitute the *pabulum*; and secondly, the diversifying of the same *pabulum* into substances so different as those of which the different kinds of plants, with all their variety of leaves, flowers, and fruits, are composed, can be owing only to the almighty *fiat* of a First Cause, by whom the processes are continually upheld.

## ANIMATED NATURE.

XV.—The organical structure of the bodies with which life is connected, could not derive its origin from any physical cause.

A law is now established according to which it is produced,—the law of generation; but as this ever implies the previous existence of parents, it could not be the original cause. Then the notion of an infinite series of generations is disproved by our reasonings against the eternity of matter; and, like that of every other infinite series of dependent subjects, will be found to involve contradiction and absurdity. Shall then the organical structure of animated bodies be ascribed to chance? Since chance is not omnipotent, since it cannot supersede or counteract, but only give play to the known properties of matter, though we should suppose a fortuitous arrangement of particles into the very shapes of body in the several classes of animated beings, the organical structure would never have followed; for matter will never by mere approximation in any state separate from the living subject, assume the forms and qualities which belong to its component parts,—blood and bones, flesh, skin, muscles, brain, &c.

If the structure of animated bodies was originally owing to the operation of natural causes, it must have proceeded from

some species of fermentation in conjunction with gravitation. But at this era of science it cannot be necessary to shew that such is its nature,—that no chemical process could have produced it, although its several substances, as they are still matter, are capable of analysis,—that there are such combinations, and arrangements, as no principle of mechanism could have formed, although they be most admirably fitted for action upon these principles,—and that gravitation, instead of furthering, would necessarily have prevented the formation and present position of its parts.—If indeed such organical structure be attributable to any natural cause, the question must instantly occur, why has that cause ceased to operate? If necessary it must have continued its acting, still giving being to new kinds of animals, or without the process of generation producing such kinds as already exist,—unless it has been suspended by some Being who can control the laws of nature,—and to avoid this difficulty the sceptic had better confess the agency of this Being in the original formation of animated nature.\*

XVI.—Still less can vitality, or the principle of Life itself, be produced or sustained by any mere natural cause.

This principle does not depend on any uniform conformation of parts or quality of fluids, for the organical structure of one order of animated beings is often widely different from that of another. In its lowest degrees, vitality is found in some animals which resemble a rude mass of jelly, and in the various species of polypi which grow and branch out like a vegetable. Food, air, and the circulation of some fluid under the notion of blood, seem to be requisite in all. But how different are the kinds of food which sustain it; how simple in some is the process of digestion, and the preparation of the circulating fluid. The blood of fishes and insects is cold. That the latter respire by means of small openings in their rings or on their sides, seems to be evident from their dying when immersed in oil, or any liquor that either contracts or fills the spiracula so as to prevent the free access of air. But the air makes no change on the colour of their blood, as it does on the blood of

\* Equivocal generation, or to speak more accurately, spontaneous production, which must have resolved into the action of chemical or physical laws by the fermentation of putrefaction or otherwise, is now justly exploded, as contrary to analogy, experiment, and sound reason. By "generation" in our reasoning, is meant any form by which the living creature can propagate its kind, whether with or without the conjunction of a male and female, as there are some species of animals with whom this either has no place, or does not seem to be absolutely requisite in all cases.

man and quadrupeds, which has been fitted for absorbing the principle of oxygen.

Does Life in the human subject depend on the properly tempered fluidity, and constant motion, of the blood? Neither the one nor the other result from the common properties of matter, or even from the modifications it has undergone in the formation of blood; for as soon as the fluid is drawn from its vessels, it tends to rest and dissolution. As it is impossible to decide, whether the fluidity depends on the motion, or the motion on the fluidity, so it cannot be determined whether both these, instead of being even the subordinate cause, be not the *effect* of life, that is of a principle of vitality distinct from them, and from all that pertains to the structure of the body. Certain it is that the motion of the blood depends on muscular action, and that although an appropriate mechanism be requisite to this, yet the perpetual motion carried on by the action of the heart could neither be produced nor sustained by any mechanical law. Neither can it be ascribed to stimulus by the absorption of oxygen by the blood in the lungs, for the muscular action is requisite to throw the blood into the lungs, and does not display itself merely in the auricle to which the blood when revived has returned. The vital motions of the heart are moreover connected with the state of the nerves, for if the pineal gland be destroyed, it almost instantly ceases. Unless the blood circulate in the proper channels, regularly supplied by the digestive process, and constantly refreshed by respiration in the lungs, there can be no muscular action; but muscular action is supposed in the very fact of circulation. Without the conversion of dead matter into living substance, the requisite structure and motions cannot be preserved; but without these again there could be no such conversion. Thus all the functions essential to vitality are *reciprocally dependent*, and therefore could neither be commenced nor sustained, but by an omnipotent arm.

XVII. The existence of a thinking principle connected with animal life, and which in man rises to those high and peculiar degrees of intelligence, which with all the concomitant powers constitute the rational soul, furnishes our last and most convincing proof of a Great First Cause.

When we form a conception of matter, we find nothing but extension and bulk,—impenetrable, divisible, and passive. It is that substance, any quantity of which doth hinder all other from intruding into its place till it be removed; which has

sensible qualities, is inert, and if once bereaved of motion cannot acquire it again of itself. Now experiment has shown, that no refinement of this substance can induce a power of sensation or thought, nor is it possible in the nature of things. It has plainly no inherent faculty of sense or perception, and since all the changes of which it is susceptible, can only produce new inward texture with alteration of surface, none of these can possibly give being to any such faculty. In the purest gas it remains equally unintelligent, as in its grossest form, and must ever do so while it is matter. Who then can give it the power of intelligence? If the atheist will hold that it is matter that thinks, he must suppose a cause distinct from matter, and to that cause he will ascribe a power beyond that which we claim for Deity itself,—a power to produce something beyond the line of all miracles, an express contradiction.

It has been alleged that motion superadded to matter may give birth to intelligence. But motion produces no change on the inherent qualities of matter, and is itself as distant from thought as the matter which is moved. A ball when impelled is no more a thinking being than when at rest; a fluid in a state of effervescence possesses no more feeling, or fancy, or power of cogitation, than when the effervescence has subsided. We appeal not simply to the evidence of common sense on this head, but to the conclusions of reason. For let it be granted to the sceptic, in giving him every advantage, that it is not simply motion somehow excited in matter that originates thought, but motion of a peculiar kind in an organized body and restricted to determinate channels,—the nerves for example, either as filled with some supposed animal spirits, or otherwise capable of receiving and conveying the impulse given by external objects,—still, 1st, It is impossible that that motion, whatever be its channel, can be other than either rectilinear or curved, neither of which, nor any conjunction of both, have the least relation to sense or thought; and 2dly, Without the interference of some power capable of controlling the laws of nature, (if not of performing contradictions) it is equally impossible that motion in matter can beget any thing but motion. And since motion generated by motion, however it may vary in velocity or direction, can never be any thing but motion, *i. e.* the translation of matter from one place to another, it will be as foreign to the faculty of thought as the motion which generated it. Propagated it may be to the end of the channel, but how, either there or in its course, sensation should be excited, would still remain a mystery not only unexplained, but totally inexplicable by any.

of the laws or properties of matter in any conceivable state. 3dly. If motion were productive of thought, then thought would be confined to a single point, not only in relation to time but to place; it could only be where the moved particle was.

Thus it appears that even Sensation, which is directly connected with the bodily organs, must be the property of some thing distinct from matter and motion; much more the powers of memory, judgment, reason and volition. The acting of these faculties is still farther removed from all intercourse with matter and all relation to its properties. Did thought consist merely in sensation or perception of the sensible qualities of matter, there might be some plausibility in attributing its existence to matter and motion, though only the plausibility of a fanciful hypothesis, scarcely delusive, and almost instantly rejected by sound reason; but since there are powers of recollection, abstraction, and deduction, which, when once furnished by means of the senses with a basis on which to operate, can either conjunctly or separately *generate* thought, and *pursue* it in long trains of association, it is most undeniable, that the subject in which these faculties reside is distinct from the body and really immaterial.

Thus then stands the argument, A thinking principle exists possessed of all the properties of spirit. As it is entirely distinct from matter, and incomparably more excellent, it cannot have derived its origin from matter. It must therefore either be self-existent and consequently eternal, which is absurd and contrary to known fact, or it must be the effect of some Great Cause, able to form it, able to connect it most wondrously with matter, and yet to uphold it in all its distinct and peculiar actions. This is the Agent in whom "we live and move and have our being." He is "the Father of lights, the Father of spirits."

## SECT. iii.

### PROOFS OF AN INTELLIGENT FIRST CAUSE.

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If there be a First Cause to which the origin both of matter and spirit must be traced, that cause must of necessity be immaterial or spiritual,—for otherwise, 1st, He could not possess the requisite property of self-existence ; 2dly, It would still be matter that produced matter, and consequently matter would be eternal in direct contradiction to the proposition, and all the reasoning by which it has been proved ; 3dly, The effect, in the production of spirit, would be superior to the cause, and entirely out of the sphere of all its possible operation.

Again, the First Cause must not only be spiritual, but spirit of the highest order, such as is exclusive of the co-existence of any similar spirit,—for unless this were the case, 1st, He could not possess the independence necessarily implied in the idea of the First Cause of all other beings ; 2d, He would be on a level with the effect,—the other spirits produced,—which is inconsistent with the notion of an originating Cause ; nay 3d, The cause would be inferior to the effect, if not upon the score of quality, yet in regard to quantity, myriads of spirits proceeding from one spirit of the same order with themselves.

But if the first cause be spirit, and spirit in the highest perfection, then, according to the properties of spirit, he will be possessed not only of volition and the power of voluntary action, (which is common to all animated beings, however low the state of their faculties, and even in those cases in which they are guided merely by instinct,) but of intelligence, and of intelligence in its highest possible degree.

Although the controversy might justly be terminated by this conclusion from the demonstration of a first cause, the design will be gained still more completely, and the point more convincingly established, by adducing the **EVIDENCE OF FACTS**. We will therefore suppose the proposition anticipated by the sceptic, “That if there be a first cause distinct from matter, he must, of course, be intelligent;” but that the argument is made to turn on this very hinge, and proofs of intelligence demanded as the most satisfactory species of evidence.

The questions connected with a regular investigation, under this form of the argument, are these,—Do we perceive any proofs of *volition* or of arbitrary constitution and arrangement in the universe?—Can we discover among these any indications of *design*, in the evident ordination of means to an end? Among these indications, again, are there any facts in which even *mechanical contrivance* decisively appears?

### I.—VOLITION.

I. Matter, as has already been proved, is not necessarily existent; its existence therefore must have depended on the Will of a First Cause.

II. Nothing but the common properties of matter are essential to its existence as matter; all its different *modifications* therefore,—its determination to different degrees of cohesion in the constitution of different metals, the number and properties of the gases, its capacity of exhibiting the phenomena of light and colours, &c. must either have originated from chance, or been owing to the will of the First Cause. But chance could have no place in their production, for, ascribe to it as much as we please, it can only give play to properties already existing; and, previous to the diversity referred to, we have no conception of any thing but the common properties of matter, which could not be the cause of that diversity. We must resort therefore to the Will of a Creator.

III. Matter cannot perceive its own properties, whether common or special. The idea of hardness, of polish, or of colour, for example, is not in the stone, but in the spectator. Now, if the ideas of the sensible qualities of exterior objects reside not in them, if they only possess that which is calculated to excite the idea,—then, upon the same principle, while the

bones, the blood, the nerves, and the brain, are confessedly nothing but matter, on a level in this respect with exterior objects, existing ideas can no more reside in them as the percipient subjects, than in exterior matter. But since it is an undeniable fact, that the properties of matter are perceived, and thus that a percipient subject exists, this also must have been owing either to chance or to the Will of a Creator. To chance it could not be owing upon the principle formerly stated, that chance is not omnipotent, but merely operates within the sphere of previously existing properties and laws, denoting some effect, which, though the infallible result of these laws, was previously unknown to us. Such a result, the existence of a percipient subject distinct from matter, could not possibly be; it must therefore be traced, with all the diversity of powers that characterise it, to the Will of a Creator. He it was that determined the different classes of animated beings, their relations and connexions, the number of their senses, the limits of their intelligence, and the organical structure adapted to all these.

IV. Besides the existence and various modifications of matter and spirit, we find in the universe many arrangements which could not be the result either of necessity or of chance, and must therefore be regarded as the arbitrary ordinations of a First Cause possessed of volition as well as power. By detailing these, we complete our sketch of the field in which the indications of design and contrivance may be afterwards sought.

1. The proof, under this head, is doubtless most striking, in those arrangements which present other phenomena than might have been expected from what is known of the operation of natural laws; and therefore the disposition of the fixed stars in absolute space may again be appealed to. The arrangement which appears in the various constellations is plainly reducible to no common standard of figure, or symmetry, such as the sceptic might suppose nature had some inexplicable propensity to assume. The reservoirs of light are but thinly scattered in some regions of the vast expanse, while in others they approach so near as to constitute what are called double stars, or are collected into groups, or seemingly condensed into nebulae more or less remote from the influence of mutual attraction, each a system by itself replenished beyond the power of human calculation. This disposition of the fixed stars, together with the phenomena of variable stars, we have already shewn, could not be generated nor even sustained by any phy-



sical law, of course it could not be owing to chance, according to the true definition of chance already repeatedly suggested; it must therefore be regarded as an arbitrary arrangement evidential of volition in the great First Cause,—solely dependant on the good pleasure of Him, who, in the language of the most ancient of books, “stretched out the north over the empty place, and hung the earth upon nothing; by his Spirit garnished the heavens and formed the crooked serpent,”—who still giveth “the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and looseth the bands of Orion, who bringeth forth Mazzaroth in his season, and guideth Arcturus with his sons.”

2. Since by analogical reasoning we conclude that the structure of other planetary systems will resemble that of our own, the position of the sun or luminous body for a centre next deserves our attention. That the magnitude of the sun, the fixed star of our system, would necessarily constitute him the centre of the system, supposing the planets to exist, will be readily granted; but whence that magnitude in the only orb adapted to be the fountain of light, and thus distinguished from the planets? or why should the largest body in the system, which assumes the place of a centre, be luminous either in itself or as encompassed with light, while the rest are opaque? So far as any physical law is concerned, all the primary planets might have moved around him in the same orbits, and with the same degrees of velocity, though he had been opaque, just as the secondaries or moons do about them. Why too, but one source of light in this system, while we perceive double stars revolving round one common centre of gravity in other parts of the heavens?

3. The different sizes and densities of the planets.—The irregularity in size shows plainly that it is arbitrary, not the result of any necessary law. Ceres, situated between Mars and Jupiter, is only, according to Herschell, 163 miles in diameter, or at most 1624 according to other astronomers, while Mars is 4189, and Jupiter 89,170. Pallas, Juno, and Vesta, in the same region, differ also in size, but are all much inferior to Jupiter, who again is larger than Saturn beyond him, and than Georgium Sidus, the outermost planet.—The calculations of density are founded on the laws of gravitation; the masses being first ascertained by the force with which the respective bodies act on one another, the mass divided by the bulk gives the density; but this last does not originate from the law. And if the calculations may be depended upon, the density varies much, Saturn's being not much greater than that of

cork, Mercury's corresponding nearly to that of lead, and the Sun's to that of water.

4. The figures of the Planets.—With regard to superficies, we have no mountains on our earth like those of the moon, far less like those of Mercury, which are supposed to be thrice as high as Chimboraco. According to Schroeter, those of Venus are still higher. Taking into view the different densities of these planets, might we not have expected the results of a physical law or of chemical action, if these must be the causes, to have been more uniform or exhibited a greater degree of similarity?—The general figure is that of an oblate spheroid, and this is ascribed to the law of gravitation, not however without supposing a certain degree of fluidity in the planets at their formation, the assumption of which is plainly gratuitous. No flattening of the poles in Mercury or Venus has yet been detected. If it be alleged that this was not to be expected in Mercury from the slowness of his rotation on his axis, let it be recollected that Venus moves faster than the earth, and that the moon, which resembles Mercury, is somewhat depressed at the poles. Jupiter, whose diurnal motion is much more rapid than that of Mars and the Earth, is more flattened than either; but Saturn again, the velocity of whose equatorial parts is less than that of Jupiter, is still more depressed. Supposing this to be accounted for by the greater degree of original fluidity, which is only hypothetic, or by the action of his ring diminishing the gravity of these parts, and thus aiding the flattening at the poles,—still, there are astronomers who doubt the justice of our attributing this figure to the laws of gravitation or centrifugal force.\*—Connected with the figures of the planets we

\* Dr. PALRY,—who endeavours to show that the Earth must have been made an oblate spheroid at the beginning, and that intention as well as wisdom are manifested in fixing the axis through the shortest diameter, that it might be a permanent axis,—has the following statement,—that on supposition of the Earth's having taken its present shape from spinning on its axis, “its first fluidity (of which vestiges are found only at a very small depth below the surface, less perhaps than an 8000th part compared with the depth of the centre) must have gone down many hundred times farther than we are able to penetrate, to enable the earth to take its present oblate form,”—and “that calculations were made a few years ago of the mean density of the earth, by comparing the force of its attraction with that of a rock of granite the bulk of which could be ascertained, when the upshot of the calculation was, that the earth, upon an average through its whole sphere, has twice the density of granite, or about five times that of water. Therefore,” he proceeds, “it cannot be a hollow shell, as some have formerly supposed, nor can its internal parts be occupied by central fire or water. The solid parts must greatly exceed the fluid; and the probability is, that it is a solid mass throughout, composed of substances more ponderous the deeper we go.” Even admitting

may mention Jupiter's belts, and Saturn's ring. If the former be, as is thought, the clouds and vapours of the planet thrown into parallel strata by the velocity of his diurnal revolution, we might expect a similar appearance in Saturn, unless it be somehow prevented by the ring. That ring is supposed to be generated by a common law, as a viscid mass thrown off from the planet. Grant it: still, that there should be such a mass was arbitrary, but much more the inequalities which exist upon it, and which we may afterwards see are clearly demonstrative of design.

5. The rotation of the planets, and the times in which it is performed.—The rotation could not, we have seen, be generated by any physical law, and it is too uniform to be ascribed to chance. At the same time the periods of revolution are regulated by no common standard. Mercury, who twinkles like the fixed stars, takes more than twenty-four days to revolve on his axis. The earth performs her revolution in twenty-four hours, Jupiter in nine, and Saturn in ten with some odds.

We might go on to the atmospheres of the planets, some of an astonishing height compared with others,—the strange fact that some planets have a moon or moons which are wanting to others,—the inclination of their axes to the ecliptic, with the varieties which this presents,—the differences between the comets and planets,—the projection of the former into orbits so dissimilar to those of the latter,—with all the diversification of matter in our own globe,—the different orders of beings, and their permanent characteristics. But it is enough to have mentioned these, as constituting with the former the confessedly arbitrary arrangements of one minutely defined, and exceedingly diversified, yet harmonious system. The atheist has no principle by which he may account for these things; the theist, while he beholds them, will lift up his eyes and say, “Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”

## II.—DESIGN.

When a fact uniformly takes place, which is not originally the result of any physical law, yet is at the same time

in a certain way that its shape was affected by revolving, yet he shows that the moderating hand of the Creator must be taken into view.—The above, he tells us, are among the remarks with which he was furnished by the Andrews Professor of Astronomy in the University of Dublin. *Not. Theol.* pp. 416, 420.

plainly fitted for the accomplishment of a certain definite purpose, it affords a sufficient indication of design.

1. In selecting a few examples from the system of arbitrary arrangements, and it is but a few we can propose to exhibit, let us begin with *Relations*.

Although the sun had been an opaque body, we have seen he might have held the place of a centre of revolution to the planets, just as the primaries do to their secondaries or moons. That the central body should be luminous, or that the only luminous body should be the largest to occupy the place of a centre, indicates a relation between him and the planets demonstrative of design in the constitution of the system. He was to be the fountain of light, and they the recipients; and certainly the fountain could not have been more advantageously placed. Nor is the relation of the earth's position to its structure and inhabitants less remarkable. Let gravity and a projected motion be fitly proportioned, and any planet will freely revolve at any assignable distance from the sun. Was it chance, then, or a divine counsel, that placed the earth in its present orbit, so well adapted to its structure, its atmosphere, and its various productions? Neither its plants nor its animals are the result of its position, yet the latter is so adapted to the former, that the plants vegetate and attain the requisite degree of perfection in the various climates to which they belong,—the animals live and enjoy the happiness suited to their natures,—man can exist in all its regions, not only in the temperate zones, but under the line, and within the polar circles. To have been either nearer the sun, or more distant, it must have had an economy entirely different. We judge in the same manner, by analogy, of the rest of the planets.

Advert next to the inclination of the axis about which the rotation of the earth is performed. Instead of being perpendicular to the plane of the ecliptic, it declines in an angle of more than twenty-three degrees. This we have seen could not be owing to any natural cause; but to this must be ascribed the grateful vicissitudes of the seasons, and those varieties in the length of the days, which befit so well the human constitution and the universal diffusion of mankind over the face of the globe. Take away the inclination, the sun would never approach nearer the northern nations than in March or September. Suppose always the same pole turned to the sun, the variety of seasons and of days would exist; but if the north were the favoured pole, ever directed to the source of light and heat, then the northern nations would always have long days

and the southern short, the former would bask in a continual summer, the latter mourn under the horrors of perpetual winter. Were the inclination to vary, how destructive to health the oscillations or sudden starts of nutation! "We might be tossed in a moment from the January of Greenland to the June of Abyssinia."

By the very great inclination of the axis of Venus to the axis of her orbit, her seasons will vary much more than ours, and be much the same at her tropics and poles.\* The axis of the earth is much less inclined to that of its orbit, which is plainly an advantage, as she is less able to bear a varied vicissitude of seasons. Does not the large and very dense atmosphere of Mars, shewn by the occultation of the stars near which he passes and by the redness of his light, compensate for the want of heat so requisite, revolving as he does on his axis in nearly the same time with our world, yet at such a distance from the sun that his annual revolution occupies nearly two of our years? That he feels accordingly the power of the solar heat just as we do, appears from the phenomena which Dr. Herschell has shewn to arise from the melting of his polar ices. This shews the propriety too of the immense atmosphere of Ceres, nearly 700 miles high and very dense near the planet, and of that of Pallas about 470. Jupiter revolves at the vast distance of 346 millions of miles beyond Mars. His axis, however, is so nearly perpendicular to his orbit that he can have no sensible change of seasons, which is manifestly an advantage. "If his axis were inclined any considerable number of degrees, just so many degrees round each pole would, in their turn, be almost six of our years in darkness and cold. What vast tracts of land would be rendered uninhabitable!" To the inhabitants of that planet the sun will appear about one twenty-eighth part as large as to us. But not to speak of his moons at present, the defect of solar light and heat is compensated by the quick returns of both, since he revolves on his axis in about ten hours. It is highly probable from observations made on his ring, that the axis of Saturn is also nearly perpendicular to his orbit, and that thus the inconvenience of different seasons to that planet

\* Before Seproeter's observations she was supposed to perform only  $9\frac{1}{4}$  rotations during the time of her annual revolution, 225 of our days nearly. On this supposition the strange appearance of the heavens and gyrations of the sun to her inhabitants were ingeniously conceived and described. (*Old Encycl. three vols. 4to.—Astronomy.*) But this state of things, so far out of all relation to that of the other planets, has been clearly disproved. We may transfer the idea, however, to other planetary systems, and learn from it how easily their economy could have been diversified.

is avoided. The great distance of the Georgium Sidus is in like manner compensated by a rapid diurnal rotation like that of Jupiter and Saturn, and an axis very little inclined to the ecliptic. (*Brewster's Encycl.—Astronomy.*) Do not the facts with regard to the other planets confirm our position as to design in the inclination of the axis of our own? And do not all the facts, taken together, clearly prove an originally contemplated relation of the planets to the sun, requiring certain adjustments corresponding to their distances?

The earth might have revolved in an ecliptic orbit although its perihelion, when in fact it approaches nearest the sun, had coincided with the summer of the northern hemisphere—or the apparent approach of the sun to that half of the globe, occasioned by the inclination of its axis; but then the temperature of the two hemispheres would not have been properly adjusted, the summer of the one had been much hotter than that of the other. We find that it has been so projected at first, that its perihelion, when it passes nearest the sun, coincides with the winter of the northern hemisphere, where the inhabitants are most numerous, and the largest proportion of land exists to require the amelioration of temperature, while the world of waters in the southern hemisphere counterbalances the increase of summer heat in that department of the globe. We perceive here a relation between the motion of the earth in its orbit, and its external conformation connected with the position and undeviating parallelism of its axis.\*

On the surface of the globe, how obvious is the relation between the structure of animals and their respective destinations! To point out one class of examples,—the length of the neck is duly proportioned to the length of the leg, in all birds formed for wading in the waters,—in the flamingo, the crane, the stork, the heron, and in all who are for other reasons mounted very high, as the ostrich, &c. But on the other hand, birds with long necks have not always long legs. The

\* Might we not specify here the phenomenon of the harvest-moon? In the autumnal months the full moon seems to rise for several nights successively at the time of sunset. “This is in consequence of her being placed in an orbit considerably inclined to the plane of the equator, and nearly in that of the ecliptic. When in the beginning of Aries, her orbit is so oblique to the horizon that she must appear to rise about the same time as the portion of her orbit through which she passes from west to east will ascend in about a quarter of an hour.” The same thing takes place once every month, but in the constitution of the system, the arrangement is such that it takes place with the *full moon* during two of the autumnal months, indicating a relation to the fruits of the earth, and the labours of the husbandman.

necessity is not the same. They may be destined to swim, like the swan and the gooseander, or they may require the length of neck for other purposes than that of fishing or searching for their food, like the pelican.

A wide field opens here for displaying the relations of all nature to the wants, the powers, and the felicities of man, so plainly by his superiority of intellect destined to be the lord of the lower creation. But it is sufficient to have looked that way,—the field has been so often traversed, and the proofs it affords press so continually on the observation and gratitude of every individual.\*

2. We pass on to the *distinction of orders*. The manner in which this is effected, presents farther evidence of design, in the selection of means adapted to an end. Do we not find in nature certain uniform and invariable marks, by which the

\* The ever-pleasing, though too often fanciful ST. PIERRE, when treating of the colours of animals, has a dissertation on this subject more fraught with truth than many of his other speculations. 1. Nature, he observes, opposes the colour of the animal to the ground on which it lives. This renders it visible, and serves to do justice to its beauty. Exceptions there are in the case of flat fishes, and some other animals, which are confounded with the ground on which they live for particular reasons, especially for the sake of safety, when it is endangered by their weakness or slowness. 2. Nature has furnished harmless animals at once with contrasts for the ground on which they live, and with similarities to that to which they may resort for safety, as in the grey lark, partridges, the brick-coloured butterfly, the cameleon, and the young of some animals. 3. Animals which live in two situations, have two contrasts of colour, as the king-fisher, duck, woodpecker, frigate. There are exceptions, in the grand division of colour, among the animals of cold and warm climates, into light and dark, of which the reason or propriety is obvious. 4. Nature has adapted her harmonies to man,—that the plumage of her birds and the beauty of her animals might not escape us,—that beauty might not be lavished where it is unseen, or not likely to be often beheld,—and that man might have proper alarms or invitations. The white bear of the north is distinguished from the snows he inhabits by his black snout, and the red glare of his eyes. The tiger, the leopard, the wasp, the rattlesnake, are, by the vivid contrasts of colour and other signs, pointed out to his fears, and seen at a distance. The same remarks may be applied to plants. Such is the substance of his *Eighth Study on Nature*. Elsewhere, he has shewn that the song of the birds, and the screams of the wild-fowl, especially at sea amidst the roaring of the waters, are adapted to their respective situations,—that the song of the birds is adapted to the ear of man, the colours of the rainbow and the glowing tints of the evening clouds to his eye. Change the relative situation of the spectator and the object, all the glories which blaze on the curtains of the west closing around the setting sun, would no longer be seen. The lark is poised at the proper elevation for mellowing its notes to his ear, and for mingling without offence with the melody of the thousands who join in the concert; but if lower and nearer, would rather incommode than delight us. The gay plumage of the tropical birds accords well with the bright regions they inhabit, while the sober livery of others, in temperate climes, is abundantly compensated by the more appropriate melody of song.



different classes, and subordinate kinds of animated beings, and of vegetable and mineral productions, are distinguished? And is it not upon this principle that the whole science of Natural History is founded?—In the department of botany, to which only we shall appeal, research has detected the distinction of classes and orders in the anthers and pistils, by whose number and relative position the purpose of discrimination is accomplished upon a plan so simple, as to leave room for the greatest display of variety in particulars,—but a plan so uniformly adhered to, as to exclude entirely the suppositions of chance. Should any one pretend to account for the common characteristics of the feline race among quadrupeds, by alleging that all the different kinds, lions, leopards, lymes, tigers, cats, &c. had originally proceeded from one pair, he will hardly venture on such an irrational assertion with regard to plants. Yet do we not see the same common characteristics, sanctioned by nature, in the different botanical classes and orders? Could it not be owing to chance, that the grasses, for example, though differing in many respects, should all belong to the class of triandria, except one, which is also distinguished from the rest by its pleasing scent, and the reasons of whose segregation may yet be discovered?

It deserves to be remarked on this article, that the distinction of classes and orders has been made permanent to the defeat of every attempt to confound them by the formation of any new kind of beings. Mules, which in some cases are more useful than the parent animals, may be produced, but they cannot be propagated. Botanists, indeed, speak of vegetable mules, which may be propagated to a certain extent. And we cannot wonder that flowers, so evidently adapted to the gratification of the eye and the smell, should be capable of improvement in this way, as well as by other means, to a very considerable extent of succession,—no disadvantage accruing from the attempt, but the contrary; whereas, serious disadvantage would arise from confounding the animal departments of nature. Perhaps, however, the language of botanists may not be sufficiently accurate on this head, their vegetable mules capable of propagation rather resembling the varieties produced among sheep and other animals by crossing the breed, than the mixture which constitutes the real mule. Still, no class, no order, is confounded; no new order is produced. The mule from *Dianthus Superbus* and the Carnation, still belongs to the same order, and even genus, with its parents, and



both parents are not only of the same order *decandria digynia*, but of the one genus *dianthus*.

3. The provisions in nature for the *preservation* of the different kinds of beings, present undeniable evidence of design. A few facts may be selected under the heads of production, food, and means of defence.

Diversified as the mode of production is, a certain striking uniformity pervades it, on which it is not necessary to expatiate. In plants, the expedients for impregnating the embryo in its capsule are numerous, and well known to every naturalist. If the pistil protrude beyond the anthers, the flower hangs its head, that the pollen may fall on the stigma. If the anthers be elongated, they gradually bend to the stigma, or suddenly curve down to meet it. In common broom, the stigma is formed among the taller and immature anthers, but the pistil, as soon as it bursts the keel-leaf, twists itself round in an instant, like a French horn, and inserts its head among the lower and mature. Sometimes the pollen is exploded, as by the anthers of the nettle, which, in the genial rays of the sun, presents the appearance of a distant fort gradually discharging its cannon. In other instances there is a visible approach and recession of the anthers.—Many curious facts might be adduced, illustrative of the relation of insects to plants in the system of connexions between the different departments of nature, exhibiting, at the same time, most evident and wonderful provisions, in cases where no activity could be exerted for preserving the species. Insects are found to assist greatly in the impregnation of plants especially of the *dichogamia* class. This fact is known to every gardener, who raises the glass of his hot-bed that bees and other insects may have free access. Some flowers have insects peculiar to themselves, and if these be wanting or have failed to find the flower (as often happens with exotic plants when brought to this country) it produces no seeds. “An insect that does not visit one sort of flower alone, but many indiscriminately, will, during a whole day, remain with that species on which it fixed in the morning, and not touch another, provided there be enough of the first species.” So careful is nature not to mar her works, as the insect, in collecting pollen, flies covered with the impregnating dust.\* Eggs and seeds, even the minutest, resist the action

\* WILLDENOW'S *Elements of Botany*, p. 316.—For evident proofs of design, consult the same writer on the impregnation of *Aristolochia Clematis*

of frost. But for this provision, which is strange and admirable in regard to such minute principles of life, many classes both of vegetable and animated nature would be in danger of total destruction. And is there no proof of design,—in depriving caterpillars of the power of generation, and reserving it for the perfected state of the insect,—in rendering worms, which are so liable to be cut asunder in the operations of digging and ploughing the earth, susceptible of complete re-organization,—in constituting fishes, which are the prey of one another to the greatest extent, as well as the food of man, so amazingly prolific,—in adapting their mode of propagation to the element in which they live,—in making some animals, which are viviparous in the favourable season when food abounds, oviparous on the approach of winter,—in continuing for a successive progeny the influence of one impregnation with such as are attached to a spot, or greatly deficient in locomotive power? In a word, the sexual conformation in all animals cannot fail to be remarked; and what is astonishing, the proportion between the sexes, especially in the human race, which, as it depends on no natural principle, is too uniform to be ascribed to chance.\*

The means of Sustaining Life, when produced, might next be considered. And here, passing the varied processes of vegetable nature, and much that belongs to this department in the animal system, the most incontrovertible marks of design appear in the adaptation of the teeth to the cutting and mastication of solids,—the provisions for swallowing,—the position, coats, and muscular strength, of the stomach,—the formation of the gastric juice,—the peculiar quality by which it acts on dead substances, while it injures not the living stomach, though of the same nature with many substances on which its power is exerted. The whole apparatus of reception, preparation, and digestion, bears the most evident relation not only to food in general, and the conversion of it into living substance, but in the different classes of animals to the different kinds of food, suited to their physical state, or furnished by the regions they inhabit.—The conviction of design is strengthened by com-

of *Parnassia*, and in general of *Comogamia* flowers. P. 317, 318. It is remarkable that flowers which impregnate themselves, have no nectaries to invite insects, as *Typha*, *Carex*, *Coix*, &c.

\* In a hive of bees, it is well known, there are many males and but one female. The proof of design in this apparent disproportion, is illustrated by the discoveries of Huxley in his *Treatise on Bees*.

parison. The bills of the feathered race, in all their variety of size and structure, and the probosces of insects, are clearly adapted to their respective sources of nourishment. They appear too at once with the perfected animal, as they are obviously connected with the symmetry of its form, and are to be immediately used. The teeth on the other hand are not requisite to symmetry of form in the human subject, such graceful rotundity and plumpness belonging to the infant face as prevents the perception of any defect; they linger, to give place to the operation of suckling, nor are they produced till the season of it has elapsed, or the child has become so habituated to this method of receiving nourishment, that their gradual appearance occasions no inconvenience to the mother; and then, as the first set would have ceased to fill the mouth when the jaw is enlarged, it falls out at the proper age, and a permanent set is produced. Not only the reception of solid food, but the attainment of the faculty of speech, requires a set prior to the expansion of the jaw. Fowls who use their bills in uttering certain notes, are provided with these at the time of excision from the egg; and the cries of other animals are not, like articulate language, dependant on the teeth.

But to return to the relations between food and animated beings, the whole race of insects, the most numerous in nature, are in the temperate and polar regions produced in the summer months, when the flowers abound with nectar, or while the plants to which in their caterpillar state they are respectively attached, are in the best state for affording the requisite nourishment. The importance of the nectary in the economy of vegetation itself, is such, that a wonderful apparatus is employed in many flowers to guard its juices from complete spoliation. In some it is lodged at the bottom of a long tube, in others it is covered with a hood filled with such acrid matter that no insects can penetrate it. Many plants of the *Ophrys* and *Larkspur* classes present the appearance of an insect, as if already pre-occupied. But in general the provision is abundant, and the nectar is common to all perfected insects, who have either to lay up stores for the winter, or to answer the purposes of nature in propagating the species. An indiscriminate feed, however, has been denied to the voracious tribes of caterpillars, who, instead of sucking the superfluous honey, devour the leaves of vegetables, and each kind is attached to its own plant,—the most noxious and the vilest weeds not excepted,—without the option of preferring those that are useful

to man and the larger animals.\*—The same relations, not productive of habits, nor attributable to chance, might be traced among the larger animals and quadrupeds. On the one hand, the rein-deer, so evidently destined in other respects for the cold and snows of the north, finds his most grateful food in the luxuriant mosses which alone can live and flourish under these snows. The camel, so evidently fitted, on the other hand, for traversing the burning deserts of the south, and transporting the merchandize to which, in these regions, other modes of conveyance would be confessedly inadequate, is formed for relishing the scanty fare and enduring the thirst of the climate. He seems to prefer the coarsest plants, wormwood, nettles, thistles, and other prickly vegetables. So long as he can find herbage to browse on, he can easily do without drinking. This faculty is not simply a habit acquired, it is the effect of his conformation. He has a stomach more than other ruminating animals, evidently intended as a reservoir to contain the water, which he drinks copiously when he finds it. Under the pressure of thirst, he can cause a part of this water to rise again, as far as the gullet.

The human taste, unlike that of all other animals, is capable of relishing, and the human stomach of receiving and digesting so great a variety of vegetable and animal substances, that man finds himself blessed with a sufficiency of food in every country, and can remove without inconvenience from one climate to another.—Nor ought we to omit here the wonderful fecundity of those vegetables on which the life of man and of the larger animals chiefly depends,—wheat, for example, and the various species of nutritive grain. These too are capable of being ex-

\* “ Many animals are provided with a long and pliant proboscis for acquiring the grateful food afforded by the nectaries of plants, as a variety of bees, moths, and butterflies; but the Sphinx Convolvuli, or Unicorn moth, is furnished with the most remarkable proboscis in this climate. It carries it rolled up in concentric circles under its chin, and occasionally extends it above three inches in length. This trunk consists of joints and muscles, and seems to have more versatile movements than the trunk of the elephant, and near its termination is split into two capillary tubes. The excellence of this contrivance for robbing the flowers of their honey, keeps this beautiful insect fat and bulky, though it flies only in the evening when the flowers have closed their petals and are thence more difficult of access.” DARWIN, *Bot. Gar.* vol. ii. p. 33. He might have added, enables it to drain some of the long-tubed flowers of the superfluous nectar from which other insects are excluded. We might ask the sceptic, could the circumstance of its flying in the night, when the flowers are difficult of access, produce this length of proboscis? or, did its having such a length of proboscis determine its being a moth of the night, and give it the other characteristics of that genus? Was there not an original adaptation of the instrument to its nature and habits?

ported without damage to almost every part of the world, and will keep long without spoiling.\* “The great solicitude of nature,” (says a scientific writer,) “for the preservation of the grasses, is evident from this circumstance, that the more the leaves are consumed the more the roots increase. It was evidently designed, that the delightful verdure of these plants should cover the surface of the earth, and that they should afford nourishment to an almost infinite number of animals. But what increases our astonishment most is, that although the grasses constitute the principal food of herbivorous animals, yet whilst these are left at liberty in the pasture, they *leave untouched* the straws which support the flowers, that the seeds may ripen and sow themselves. Add to this, that many of the seemingly dry and dead leaves of grasses revive and renew their verdure in the spring. And on lofty mountains, where the summer heats are hardly sufficient to ripen the seeds, the most common grasses are the *festuca ovina*, the *poa alpina* and the *aria cæspitosa*, all which are viviparous and propagate themselves without seeds.”†

Among the evidences of design demonstrative of an Intelligent First Cause, must be ranked the means of Defence with which both plants and animals are furnished. These are very various, accommodated to the necessities of the subject,—prickles, thorns, acrid juices, odours, a peculiar sensibility which shrinks from danger, or entangles and crushes the foe,—stings, horns, talons, claws, fluids capable of being ejected on the pursuer, a bag or pouch for receiving the young, &c. It were easy to shew that none of all these could be the result of habits of resistance, or of local circumstances, far less of chance, to which neither foresight nor precaution can ever be ascribed.‡ —It is of more consequence to remark, in conclusion, that for the evident preservation of all animated beings, none of the *vital motions* are dependant on volition, or left wholly to the care of the individual. The heart beats, the lungs play, the vermicular motion of the bowels, and the whole process of secre-

\* *Nature Delin.* vol. i. dial. 15. “In the year 1707 a magazine of corn was opened in the castle of Mentz which had been lodged there in 1578, and the bread which was made of it proved exceeding good,” &c.

† WITHERING’S *British Plants*, vol. i. p. 130.

‡ Exceptions from the law of uniformity on this head, curious enough, may be found specified by Darwin and other naturalists; but these, so far from invalidating, rather confirm greatly our general proposition; e. g. The hollies in Needwood forest have their lower leaves edged with prickles, but higher up, where they rise above being injured by the browsing of animals, the leaves have no such defence.

tion and digestion, go on whether we think of them or not, when we are asleep as well as when awake. On a similar principle, the eyelids nictate involuntarily, to cleanse or defend the organ of vision ; and the wax is generated in the ear, to protect it from the intrusion of insects and small animals with which the atmosphere abounds, and to preserve the proper tone of the parts. Much too, that afterwards depends on volition, though connected with safety or growth, is in infancy and early life the dictate of instinct, ever true to its purpose.

### III.—MECHANICAL CONTRIVANCE.

Although design may be obvious to reason and common sense where the means employed are not strictly mechanical, yet when the laws of physics are so evidently made subservient to an end, as to give indication of nice and skilful contrivance, the evidence of design is still more convincing.

This argument is chosen by Dr. PALEY, who confines himself to it in his *Natural Theology*—an admirable work, which ought to be read by all who would study with care the question at issue. He has given the argument in its best form, and fortified it by a long detail of instances well selected, naturally arranged, and described with great perspicuity.—The substance of the argument, as assumed by another eminent author, may be given in the following extract :—

“ When we examine a watch, or any other piece of machinery, we instantly perceive marks of design. The arrangement of its several parts, and the adaptation of its movements to one result, shew it to be a contrivance ; nor do we ever imagine the faculty of contriving to be in the watch itself, but in a separate agent. If we turn from art to nature, we behold a vast magazine of contrivances ; we see innumerable objects replete with the most exquisite design. [This is the minor of the argument which Dr. Paley remarks is cumulative, and on which he has led a proof of facts entirely satisfactory to every candid mind.] The human eye, for example, is formed with admirable skill for the purpose of sight ; the ear for the function of hearing. As in the productions of art we never think of ascribing the power of contrivance to the machine itself, so we are certain the skill displayed in the human structure is not a property of man, since he is very imperfectly acquainted with his own formation. If there be an inseparable relation between the ideas of a contrivance and a contriver ; and it be evident in

regard to the human structure, that the designing agent is not man himself, there must undeniably be some separate invisible being, who is his former. This great Being we indicate by the appellation of Deity.\*

If every indication of contrivance that exists in a watch, or any other piece of mechanism, shall be found in nature, and with a difference on the side of nature greatly to its advantage, reason demands that the same allowances be made and the same principles recognised in judging of the one and the other.

Now in regard to the watch, it would not invalidate the conclusion to be drawn from the marks of contrivance,—first, that we had never seen a watch made, nor known an artist capable of making one, or that we were incapable of producing such a piece of mechanism ourselves;—second, that it might be put out of order or sometimes went wrong;—third, that there were a few parts of it concerning which we either could not discover, or had not yet discovered, in what manner they contributed to the effect.

Again, no man in his senses could think that the mechanism was sufficiently accounted for by saying,—first, that it was one of the many possible combinations of material forms;—or second, that there existed in things a principle of order, which had spontaneously disposed the parts of the watch into their present form and situation;—or third, that the whole was the result of the laws of metallic nature:—much less would he be driven out of his conclusion, by being told that he knew nothing at all of the matter.

In fine, since there is succession in nature, in order to accommodate the simile from art, that the estimate of right reason may be fully ascertained, let us suppose that the watch had the power of producing another like itself,—then, first, this would greatly increase our admiration of the skill of the contriver;—second, although he might be only indirectly the maker of those produced in succession, the argument for an original contriver would still remain good;—third, although it might be no longer probable that the watch we possessed proceeded immediately from the hand of the artificer, the artificer must still be supposed, the marks of contrivance not being otherwise accounted for;—nor, fourth, is any thing gained by running the difficulty farther back, for it is not thereby lessened, so as to afford a prospect of its being exhausted, since the question will ever

\* HALL'S *Ser. on Infidelity*,—which in regard to the moral consequences of Atheism, deserve to be deeply pondered.



occur, who produced the first, and formed with it the apparatus for producing others?—fifth, the maker of the first would be acknowledged as in truth the maker of every other produced by it.\*

The argument thus fenced is made out by induction of particulars. To preserve entire the interest of Dr. PALEY's very able work on this subject, it shall be our endeavour to avoid, as far as can be done with propriety, merely retailing the facts he has adduced, and rather to show how easily the proofs might be increased.

I. The structure of the eye, however, cannot well be omitted. We only remark that the defect of the best formed telescopes is well known. In consequence of the spherical figure of the glasses, the focus of those rays which fall near to the limb of the glass, and of such as pass near to its centre do not coincide. This defect, after various attempts to obviate it, has been judged irremediable. But although men have in this instance found that there are bounds placed to their utmost skill and ingenuity, the error is entirely prevented in the human eye, by the curious construction of the crystalline humour, the principal refracting lens of the organ of vision, which gradually increasing in density from the limb to the centre, counteracts, by the wonderful variation of refractive power, the disadvantage that would otherwise have been felt. Must the instrument be the result of contrivance, and the perfection of contrivance be denied in the structure of the eye? Or shall we not admit the existence of a cause, who is neither the eye itself nor any part of its mechanism, to whom nothing is impossible and whose skill nothing can surmount?—The hands may be hardened by labour, but will any man in the right exercise of reason pretend that the habit of *seeing* has produced the very *means* of sight? Could the habits of insects; and of birds produce that diversity in the organ of vision which is so admirably adapted to their respective destinies, and the mechanism of which has equally attracted the attention of the curious?

\* PALEY, *Nat. Theol.*—This is the substance of the argument.—For caution it must be observed, that no concession of the *immediate agency* of the contriver of Nature in the succession of plants and animals, is intended; but though the simile fails in this point the argument is strengthened. If a first intelligent cause must be admitted, though he were not directly the author of what is produced in succession, much more if the things thus produced be such as to require and evince his immediate agency as truly as the parent creature first made, perhaps as astonishingly were we not so familiar with the mode of succession.



II. The mechanical principles on which strength is combined with lightness,—or the proportion of strength greatly augmented beyond the quantum of matter employed,—or the power of resistance secured without a needless waste of matter,—are constantly observed in the system of nature. Thus the reeds of corn, and other tall-growing herbaceous plants, which have a weighty head to support, are *hollow*, and by this means while no matter is unnecessarily wasted, the strength of the stalk, like that of an iron tube or hollow pillar, is increased; it is capable of supporting the ear, and bringing it to perfection by exposing it duly to the action of the sun and the air. The young shoots of trees, also, while in their soft and herbaceous state, especially of those that shoot up quickly, consist of a thin rind of firm woody fibres on the outside only, while the inside is filled with a spongy matter called pith; thus the diameter of the shoot is greatly augmented in proportion to its solid contents, and the shoot is capable of making a much greater resistance than it could otherwise have done. But when by age the woody fibres have acquired a firmer consistence, the pith is gradually diminished in size till at length it is wholly obliterated. This beautiful economy will be found to apply, not only to vegetable, but to animal productions. Had the quills of the wing and tail feathers in fowls been each a mass of solid matter, they would have formed an insupportable weight, and been obviously unsuitable to the purpose of flying; on the other hand, had the whole of the matter proper for constituting any single quill been reduced into one solid bar instead of a tube, it would not have possessed, perhaps, one hundredth part of the strength which is equally requisite to fit it for its use. In animals the bones, too, which have the principal weight to support, are all hollow.—Similar remarks might be made on the combination of lightness, pliability and strength, in the texture of the muscles, and the adaptation of the ligaments in the animal frame.

III. Referring to the work already commended, for a sufficiently full, and almost to every capacity intelligible view of the mechanical structure and arrangement of the bones, muscles, and vessels of animal bodies,\*—it shall be enough to mention, that the muscular fibre which is transversely laid in other cases, has a spiral texture in the heart, a sign of original adaptation, no other form being suited to the peculiar contractions on which the proper function of that most important vital organ depends.

\* PALEY, *Nat. Theol.* ch. viii. ix. x.

IV. Besides the relations of interior structure in living beings to inanimate nature, evident marks of contrivance appear, in the adaptation of their exterior form to the elements with which they are surrounded. If the world of waters was to be replenished with inhabitants, an organization different from that of those who walk the earth or wing the air must be requisite. The whole structure of fishes is, accordingly, the best adapted on mechanical principles to the element in which they live. Some are admirably fitted by their shape for cleaving the flood with rapidity; none have any lateral projecting members calculated to retard their course. Expiration could not well be effected in the bosom of the deep; but we find in the gills, an apparatus for passing the water regularly over the organ fitted for imbibing the vital principle of the air which the water contains. The fins on the back of the fish, with a slope or elevation proportioned to the quickness of movement for which it is destined, preserve its poise, while those under the belly serve the various purposes of oars—in advancing the body, turning it, changing its velocity, or even arresting its course. The tail, strong, pliant and active, is a helm properly situated, and at the same time contributes by its playing to advance the head, like an oar at the stern of a boat. And then, upon the principle that a body will swim only when lighter than that quantity of the fluid whose place it fills, the air-bag is calculated to increase or diminish the specific gravity, and in some the volume, of the fish, and thus enable him to rise to the top, sink to the bottom, or continue suspended at any determinate depth.—Birds who cannot by any process of this kind be either rendered lighter, or brought to an equal poise with the quantity of air they displace, are furnished with wings sufficiently strong for elevating their bodies, and at the same time so pliant as to give place in a certain degree to the current which is struck, that the apparatus be not injured. What an admirable piece of mechanism is a feather, all its filaments sloped in the proper direction, and hooked together with the due degree of adhesion, which when occasionally disturbed, is instantly resumed! As lightness, however, is requisite, the bones of birds, though solid and substantial enough, to keep their bodies together, are notwithstanding so small and hollow, that they make no considerable addition to the weight of their flesh. The body of a bird is neither very massive, nor equally thick in all its parts; but well disposed for flight, sharp before, and gradually increasing to its proper bulk or dimensions.

the pectoral muscle small. In birds the admirably fitting them for moving through the light element, in which the anterior extremities perform the office of oars. In order to agitate these extremities require and are seen in a degree of extension in the form of wings expanding. For moving force, the pectoral muscles are thick and ample. To afford such a receptacle, the sternum is broad and ossified in the middle called the brisket, and the projection which this forms on the sternum there is no analogy among quadrupeds. The ribs are placed before the sternum, evidently to prevent them from approaching one another, as in the breast. The lungs too, instead of being in a bag as in man and the quadrupeds, in birds, without any envelope, pierced with vessels into a vesicle; and the whole abdomen is filled with air which being inflated, considerably augments the buoyancy of the bird, and render it specifically lighter, and is best adapted to the density of the body element to be traversed, the same purpose already noticed in fishes. This structure of the body of the bird fits the creature for submergence and prevents them from being torn in rapid descent now for an exception. We find it in the Caiman, a creature which, while it retains its place among the aquatic animals, undergoes certain alterations in the

the body rendered necessary. The other is inserted behind at the os pubis. The pectoral muscle is much smaller than the sternum, scarcely covering a third part of it, and covered with fat which forms a cushion for the anterior callosity. The air vesicles are reduced both with regard to number and capacity. There was no need of the fork; it exists, however, as—in connexion with outward form—a mark of the interior construction of a fowl; but being divided at the base, it is unfitted for answering the same purpose as in other fowls. The feathers, though of exquisite fabric, entirely precluding the idea of mere rudiments in a yet unfinished being, are all detached filaments without adhesion, clearly not suited to the purpose of flying.

#### IV.—INSTINCT.

So much do the wonders of what is commonly denominated Instinct press themselves on the observation of mankind, that no detail of instances can be requisite to prove its existence. Curious as the subject is, however, it has not yet been investigated with the care it deserves. We are unable in some cases to distinguish between instinct and appetite, in others to mark the precise point where instinct terminates and the influence of instruction begins, or to discriminate it from certain degrees of intelligence influencing choice. But it is not necessary to be so minutely accurate; enough may be found for our purpose, in a general definition, as the basis of two propositions, and the reader is referred to the *Natural Theology*, ch. xviii. xix., for illustrations which he can easily arrange under the one or the other.

I. Instincts are certain propensities undirected by reason, prior to experience, and independent of instruction.—Perhaps we might be allowed, for the sake of distinction, to say that some instincts are occasional and others are permanent. The first term we would apply to those cases in which the propensity vaguely denominated instinct is called into action but seldom, and rather by artificial than by natural circumstances. It is in these cases, and chiefly because of the deviation from what is usual, that the actions or expedients imputed to instinct have been thought to indicate a certain degree of intelligence influencing choice. In all other cases the animal may be conceived to go on somewhat like a machine, but here is selection, such as would have been the result of the most correct judgment or reason in like circumstances; and as the

spectator or inquirer is a rational being accustomed to act from motives, he feels strongly impelled to interpret the actions and expedients of the most insignificant animals upon the same principle, in all these cases of deviation.\* We are apt to err, however, though without intention, in judging analogically of other animals by our own habits, when there is nothing to support the analogy; and therefore, if there be no other facts sufficient to prove that the degree of intelligence supposed to be displayed in the cases referred to, really and permanently belongs to the animal, we ought still even in these cases to abide by the idea of instinct as a propensity undirected by reason, however inexplicable the subject may be; and in its own sphere, it is not perhaps more inexplicable than the operations of reason, which we think we understand, because they are so familiar to us. The truth of the definition will be readily admitted with regard to permanent instincts, or those which are called into action by natural circumstances. The hen, who shews a propensity to incubation, gives no evidence of intelligence even in that very matter, since she will sit upon unimpregnated eggs, or upon pieces of chalk, and easily receives the eggs of the duck or the partridge instead of her own. Neither can we believe that the bee understands the mathematical principles upon which its cells are constructed, or that the lion-ant has reasoned about the form and site of its pit. Instinct operates with the most undeviating power among those animals whose faculties are of the lowest order. It is clearly a propensity prior to all experience and instruction. "The chick of the common dunghill-fowl, no sooner breaks the shell than it understands the cluck of its mother, and obeys her with the most prompt alacrity. The very day it is hatched, if a kite appear in the air, it discovers the most evident symptoms of terror, while other creatures of larger size are suffered to move about without occasioning any sort of alarm. The duckling, in like manner, the very first time it sees the water, runs towards it, and plunges at once into the pool, not only without the aid of

\* See a paper on the apparent intelligence shown by *Ants*, *Guardian*, Nos. 156, 157; and the interesting observations and experiments in *Huxley on Ants*, with the concluding remarks in the *Edinburgh Review* of that work. — A bee, superintending the structure of cells by those who furnished the plates of wax, was remarked to have been somehow or other apprised of a foundation being inaccurately laid by a worker, which it immediately altered. Other instances of approach to reason and reflection, apt to strike with considerable surprise, repeatedly occur in *KIRBY and SPENCE'S Entomology*, and the details in the *Entertaining Library*, on *Insects*.

maternal invitation, but in spite of the utmost efforts of the hen (if it has been so hatched) to prevent it." \*

II.—The existence and allotments of instinct afford powerfully convincing evidence of design.—It is a peculiar propensity adapted to many necessary and valuable purposes. Without it the distinction of classes among animated beings would have been plainly impracticable; or if such distinction had existed, many would have been in danger of perishing. Either all must have been rational, and formed at the same time in maturity, or something capable of answering the purposes of reason, and with infallible certainty, must have been given to the animals destitute of it; and this compensating principle, in order to co-exist with the want of reason, must have been limited to that class of necessities which, although reason be withheld, are essential to animated beings, and therefore could not be avoided. Such precisely is Instinct. It compensates for the want of a reasoning power in regard to all these necessities, and it shews itself most in animals whose faculties are of the lowest order,—who could not be cared for, guided, and directed by others, and who are in no respect responsible to man. The allotments of it are wonderful. They not only contribute to the distinction of orders among those who are guided by it, but present a striking accommodation in measure and degree to the habits and destinies of each order, and particularly to the necessities of the young. The different kinds of birds are discriminated from one another as truly by the construction and site of their nests, as by their shape, their colours, or their song. Their organical structure, and the diversity to be seen in the size and appearance of their eggs, did not proceed from themselves, but the structure of their nests, however it may be influenced by these, as clearly belongs to the distinction of genera and species; and thus indicating the same design with the former, must be traced to the same supreme and all-disposing intellect.

One great business intrusted to instinct is the preservation of the individual or the kind; and this appears in many cases in which sexual appetite has no concern. How clear is the evidence of this design in the propensity of birds to hang their nests on the outermost boughs, in those countries where they are apt to be annoyed by monkeys,—the natural inhabitants of trees! Caterpillars, too, who do not propagate, but in whom

the race must be preserved, when they prepare a retreat for themselves, seem to foresee the length of time during which they are to remain in the chrysalis state, and according to this circumstance regulate the solidity and position of their tombs. Some who are to remain but a few days, choose a tender leaf and moisten it with gum. The leaf bends gradually, twists itself up, and dries round the animal, who is there quickly matured by the heat of the sun. Others merely suspend themselves by a thread or drop of glue to a vine-prop, and wait their change. But those who are to pass the winter in the chrysalis state take other precautions, (if the expression be allowed,) seek the shelter of some house or other covert, and there incrust themselves in a more durable vault. Moths who fly in the evenings before the twilight is gone, and in the summer months when it disappears but for a short time, live for several days, and have thus an opportunity of enjoying existence, and continuing the species. These, it is well known, may be attracted by a candle, and are prevented by no instinct from perishing in the flame. But the ephemeral fly, which is produced during the darkness of night, and has but an hour or two to live for the purposes of nature, though it be equally attracted by a light, is yet repelled by its instinct from rushing to the flame; and if a torch be held up at the time of their emanation from the waters, myriads will resort to it and fly in circles around it at a convenient distance. But for this instinct it might have been in the power of man, by kindling large fires, to have destroyed the whole race.\* The working bees are of neither sex, yet how solicitous are they about the preservation of the species! And as this greatly depends on their own existence, a portion of their labour is most anxiously devoted to the treasuring up a store of food for the season in which it is not to be found.

Besides the discrimination and preservation of the different orders of animated beings, the manner in which the force of instinct is proportioned to the exigency of the case, is a farther

\* The phenomenon referred to is strikingly exhibited on the waters of the Seine. Many of the Parisians, aware of the time when it may be expected, assemble on the banks with lights, and guarding their mouths and nostrils, that they may not be suffocated with the immense swarm rising from the river, are amused and delighted with the brilliant circles formed around them, the transparent shining wings of the insects reflecting all the colours of the rainbow. The emanation takes place in August. The swarm begins to rise between ten o'clock and midnight, and in the morning lies dead on the banks sometimes more than a foot in thickness, besides the myriads immersed in the river.

evidence of design. The idea of relation previously intended and recognised by a First Cause planning his work, is strongly impressed on the mind. The chick understands the voice of the hen, can balance its body, can walk and run as soon as it breaks from the shell. But “an infant is the most helpless of all beings; no danger alarms it, nor can it make the smallest effort to preserve itself. A tiger may approach it without occasioning terror; nor would it attempt to screen itself though the lion’s mouth were opened to devour it. The voice of the mother is not understood for many weeks, and knowledge is acquired but by slow degrees in consequence of a development of its rational faculties.” Now, not to mention, that if its progress be slow, its ultimate attainments are far superior to those of other animals, the necessity of varied and powerful instinct is not the same, for the parents of the human being are both rational and responsible; and full scope is left for the exercise of that care about their offspring, which, while it is rewarded by manifold pleasures, converts parental intelligence, affection, and moral obligation, to all the purposes answered by instinct in the young of other classes,—and to higher purposes, on a plan suited at once to the dignity of our race, and our high susceptibility of moral and intellectual improvement.

No theories that have been devised to account for instinct, can affect the argument so far as it bears on the evidence of design. Say that the instincts of animals are analogous to the irritability of plants, by which the impressions of heat and cold, the increase or diminution of the weight of the atmosphere, &c. contract or expand them; still, the instinct in the one department of nature, like the irritability in the other, has an evident direction to certain useful purposes, which it will ever accomplish. No matter how the fact be explained, the proof of design demonstrative of an Intelligent First Cause contemplating the relations and necessities of his works, will be as valid as ever. One theory “resolves instinct into sensation, and asserts that what seems to have a view to the future is accounted for by the present disposition of the animal, *e. g.* incubation is prompted by the pleasure arising from the pressure of the smooth convex shells on the abdomen of the fowl. But this does not lessen the force of the argument, for why is the pleasure given, or why does the organization on which it depends exist, but in relation to the future?”\*

\* PALEY, *Nat. Theol.* ch. xviii.



## FINAL CAUSES.

### V.—FINAL CAUSES.

is a twofold method of reasoning from final causes.—  
that which exists for an end does not exist for itself,  
sequently is not necessarily existent. But all the  
departments of nature exist for an end; therefore no  
it is necessarily existent. The *major* is universally  
but the *minor* will of course be denied by the atheist.  
hold that Nature exhibits no fixed ends; and that  
ctrine of final causes is a mere chimera,—that the eye  
made for seeing, nor the ear for hearing, nor the sun  
g light, &c. It is easy to demonstrate, however, that  
rent parts of the universe exist each for some special  
and that all of them in their several relations, con-  
and combinations are directed to one great end—the  
tion of the whole, and in order to this, the preservation  
particular part. The conclusion will be, that since this  
ope of the whole, no single part can be regarded as a  
necessarily existent; and what may be affirmed of each  
arts distinctly in succession must be applicable to the  
This, then, may be considered as the *first* step in the  
t,—the universe is not necessarily existent. The *second*,

perfect. If the present sensations of the female among birds seem to account for her propensity to sit on her eggs, what shall we say of the neuters among bees, to whom the eggs do not belong? They have no sexual feelings, yet they laboriously prepare the nest in which the eggs are to be deposited, seem to understand the necessities of the female, and to calculate the very number of eggs to be laid. Allow that an appropriate sensation has been given them by their Maker, (for who else could give it,) and that this prompts them to provide for the business of propagation or for laying up the requisite stores of food, still no sensation whatever can account for that skill, the attribute of reason, which appears in the construction of the cells where the eggs and food are deposited,—and even in regulating the sensations supposed. The insect knows no more of the matter than the machine which teases and produces in due succession the rolls of cotton, spins it into thread, or coils it into skeins. The structure of a cell by the process of instinct, as far as intelligence is concerned, just resembles the production of those plants by the process of vegetation which afford the appropriate *nidi* or nests to other species of insects; that is, however different the means, their adaptation in the one case and the other, with their respective relations to the end, are entirely the work of the Almighty; and on this head the facts are of the same order with others in nature, not usually imputed to instinct, because supposed to be less in the power of the animal,—as, for example, that pucerons should be viviparous in summer when food abounds, and oviparous in autumn for the purpose of escaping destruction by the severity of winter.—It is not meant to affirm that insects or animals acting by instinct are mere machines, but that they are so in point of intelligence, or the skill which ensures and infallibly produces the effect. They are living machines, in which it may be said the principle of perpetual motion is employed, and to the best purpose, superseding the application of external force; not, however, continuing the action, but capable of suspending and renewing it in the proper circumstances. The formation of such machines, so far beyond all the power of art, shews a skill and contrivance which certainly argues an Intelligent and Perfect Cause. But from the complexion of the machine, all its actings (we shall call them rather than motions) must be sustained and regulated by the same cause, and to him alone must be ascribed the *continual contrivance* evinced in all the results of their acting.

principle of universal amelioration in nature. All the properties of matter, common or specific, with the laws connected with them, and all its arrangements agreeably to these laws, are solely adapted for preserving the system *as it is*. Instead of tending to improve it by inducing any new or superior organization, they only determine the perpetuity of the present structure, and the perpetuity of matter in its physical modifications, while they leave it susceptible of those changes of form, &c., by art and other means, which may contribute to the comfort of mankind or the purposes of nature.

II. Let us once more lift our eyes to the heavens, and glance at the arrangement, the compensations, the counteractions, the provisions against disturbance, and the nicely-accurate mathematical adjustment of all the bodies in our planetary system.

All the planets move nearly in the plane of the ecliptic, to indicate their relation to one another as parts of one system; yet not exactly in that plane, to prevent continual occultations. It was necessary they should move in the same direction. They must, however, be projected at certain determinate distances, to guard against the perturbation which would otherwise be occasioned by mutual attraction. The distances are such as preclude the danger that might have arisen from this cause; and such as indicate a due respect, not only to the mass of the planet, but to the number and order of the satellites with which some of the planets are attended, and the attraction of which had also to be taken into the count. For if the planets were to be projected at certain determinate distances, this was a new consideration,—the provision to be made for light and heat to those which should be far removed from the fountain of both. That their relation to the sun on these heads was contemplated, may be evident from three things, in which the accommodation is so striking and so much out of the line of natural causes, that it could not possibly be owing to chance.

1. The position of their axes, and the height and density of their atmospheres, already remarked as proofs of design.

2. The existence of moons. The earth is the first planet with a satellite. One is sufficient, and one exists. A God cannot be considered as dependant on one species of means for the accomplishment of his purposes. He might choose to indicate this by deviating from the plan of satellites, after passing into that region in which a compensation for the want of light had been shewn to be necessary or proper by the forma-

tion of our moon. Mars, accordingly, and the four lately discovered planets, are otherwise provided. By these four, the great interval between Mars and Jupiter is filled, though in a peculiar way. They move nearly at the same distance from the sun, and have their perihelion in the same quarter of the heavens. As regards light, they may have much benefit both from Mars and Jupiter. If the inhabitants of Mars have not some peculiar conformation of the eye adapted to their quantity of light, their distance from the sun and want of a moon may be compensated by the planet's being phosphorescent—giving out in the night the light it has imbibed during the day. Jupiter is provided with four moons, the third and fourth of which must give much light, since they are so large as sometimes to be seen by us with the naked eye. These moons are so adjusted in their revolution, that they cannot be all eclipsed at once, and when the sun is simultaneously eclipsed by the second and third, the first is in full opposition, but the benefit of the fourth is enjoyed.\* Saturn is found to have no less than seven moons, and Uranus or the Georgium Sidus, six. Till lately, however, Saturn was supposed to have only five, and not merely analogy but facts warrant us to conclude that the Georgium Sidus has more than six,—for the nearest which has been discovered, is at a far greater distance from that planet than the first, second, and third of Saturn,—the sixth and seventh, though so named, being still nearer the primary than the first; so that no less than five of Saturn's moons revolve round him nearer than the first of the six assigned to the Georgium Sidus, which takes near six days to perform its revolution, whereas the fifth in a direct line from Saturn takes but four days and a half. The outermost of the Georgium Sidus requires 107 days, and may therefore be considered as the last of a series, several of which have not been discovered.†

\* “It is obvious from these interesting results, (calculations had been made,) that a wonderful provision is made, in the system of Jupiter, to secure to that planet the benefit of his satellites. When he is deprived at the same instant of the light of the first and second, or of the first and third, the remaining one of the three cannot possibly be eclipsed, but is in such a point of its orbit as to give considerable light to the planet. The simultaneous eclipse of the second and third forms an exception to this remark, for at that instant the first has its dark side to the planet. Even in this case, however, the first emerging from the sun's rays is gradually turning more and more of its luminous hemisphere to Jupiter.”—*Edinburgh Encycl.* v. ii. 645. Let us remember at the same time how rapidly the planet revolves.

† The libration of the moon which occasions the same side to be always turned to our world, deserves our attention as it depends on her structure. It has been found that she is not only elevated at the equator, as might be

3. The size of the sun and intenseness of his light. Though moons were provided, yet for the illumination of these in distant regions, and for other purposes, it was still requisite that the source of light should be immense. The processes of nature, the labours of art, and the business of life, must not greatly depend on the feeble and ever-varying light of a moon, or any number of moons. It has been calculated that the sun, distant as he is, gives a 1000 times more light to Saturn than the full moon does to us. How strong his light is, may be judged from eclipses which occasion very little diminution of it, and even in total eclipses, when the emergent limb is but

expected from the diminution of centrifugal force, (supposing her somewhat fluid at first,) but to a far greater degree; and that the elevation is entirely peculiar, not to be explained by any law, since it is four times greater in the direction of the diameter which points to the earth than in other parts. "In consequence of the attraction of the earth upon this elevated portion, La Grange has shewn that the velocity of the moon's motion is sometimes retarded and sometimes accelerated, and that the tendency of this attraction is to produce an equality between the rotation and the revolution of the moon, even supposing them to have been different at first." This primeval difference is gratuitously assumed; we may as well conceive them to have been equal at first. At any rate, the law of gravitation, though it have place in now rendering the phenomenon invariable, had no place in producing the elongation of the moon in the direction of her diameter to the earth. This, though it adapts her to the operation of the law, is evidently a confirmation arbitrary in its nature, and thus an indication of ulterior design. This will farther appear, if we admit with La Place, that the extraordinary high mountains in the moon have their share of the influence in producing the phenomenon. We are apt to wonder what purpose such lofty elevations, far exceeding any on the earth, can serve, in so small a body, and according to our way of judging so disproportioned to her size, especially as they rise far beyond her atmosphere, and therefore can answer no such ends as the mountains of our globe. But one object appears in their subserving the libration by which her rotatory and revolutionary motions are made to coincide. Our proof of forecast would be still more clear, could we ascertain the ulterior object. On this the writer will hazard what appears to him the most probable conjecture. The uniformity of the same phenomenon in the moons of other planets, may intimate that the libration is somehow essentially requisite to make the body answer the end of a satellite, as a compensation for the want of light. (We may style this the main or original end, though we admit the moons to be inhabited, as the air, plants, water, &c. are filled with animated beings, many of them invisible to the naked eye, though the *main design* of these departments of nature was not to support these minute animals.) To answer the purpose of a moon, it was requisite that the side turned to the primary should consist chiefly of *land*, since water would absorb the rays instead of refracting them, or only reflect the image of the sun on a small scale, and in a certain direction. But to be inhabited, the moon could not be without water. The greatest collections of it may be on the other side, furnishing vapours, or permeating the globe by proper channels, affecting its minerals, and producing volcanoes. While it is adapted to the purposes of nature, its original end as a *compensatory* light, is ensured by the libration.

the breadth of a silver-wire, the splendour is surprising. In size he is so great, that the whole mass of matter in all the planets is not  $\frac{1}{800}$  part of that contained in the sun; and the luminous matter that surrounds him is of still greater surface than himself. So intense is the light that we perceive, it is sufficient to render the planets visible to us, some of them very brilliant, and also to illumine the moons of that one which is farthest from the centre.

Now, though some votary of chance might contend, that the planets had arranged themselves at their respective distances, and that this accidental arrangement first gave birth to the present system, which would not otherwise have existed, yet he cannot possibly do honour to his reason and at the same time affirm, that this supposed accidental arrangement also occasioned the appropriate inclination of their axes, produced their moons in the requisite allotment, adapted these moons by a proper libration to the purpose of satellites, adjusted their revolutions, rendered the sun luminous, and gave it the needful intensity of light. Of these facts there is no explanation, but upon the principle of contemplated relations, and the Forecast of an intelligent Being.

The arrangement of such a vast system as the universe, required, moreover, many provisions against the interference and perturbation of its parts, and many counteractions of such perturbation where it could not be avoided without sacrificing a greater good, or marring the symmetry of the whole. In our system alone, we may just mention the influence of the planets on each other, and on the sun,—the consequent perturbation of their elliptic motions,—the inequality of the moon, and of the satellites of Jupiter,—the action of the sun and moon on the earth producing a slow motion on its poles around the poles of the ecliptic,—the influence of gravity on the ocean,—the paths of comets in their courses;—how were all these, and many other difficulties in such a complicated system under the power of one great law, to be so adjusted as to prevent the early or later derangement and dissolution of the whole?

According to La Place, “the perturbations of the elliptic motion of the planets may be divided into two classes, not essentially different, the *secular inequalities* which increase with extreme slowness, and the *periodic inequalities* which depend on the configurations of the planets, both with respect to each other and to their nodes and perihelia. The latter, according to their name, are re-established every time these configurations become the same, that is, at intervals not very long. But the

former are found to be equally periodic, though their periods are much longer, as they develop themselves only in the course of ages." So that, on this head, the mean motions of these bodies and their distances from the sun are invariable; the system is so constructed as to preserve its form, rectifying itself at certain calculable periods, and these rectifications are a part of the constituted order of things.

La Place supposes the following questions may occur to the mind:—"Have the planetary ellipses always been, and will they always be, nearly circular? Among the number of planets have any of them ever been comets, whose orbits have gradually approached to the circular form by the mutual attraction of the other planets? Will the obliquity of the ecliptic continually diminish, till at length it coincides with the equator, and the days and nights become equal on the earth throughout the year?" Analysis answers these questions in the most satisfactory manner. "I have (he says) succeeded in demonstrating, that whatever be the masses of the planets, inasmuch as they all move in the same direction, in orbits of small eccentricity, and little inclined to each other, their secular inequalities will be periodic, and even contained within narrow limits; so that the planetary system will only oscillate about a mean state, from which indeed it will deviate but a very small quantity. The planetary ellipses, therefore, have always been and always will be nearly circular; from whence it follows that no planet ever has been a comet, at least if we only calculate upon the mutual actions of the planetary system. The ecliptic will never coincide with the equator, and the whole extent of its variations will never exceed  $2^{\circ}$ ,  $42'$ ."

The vast number of comets indicates that they are necessary for some purpose or purposes in the general economy of nature; as yet, however, their use is unknown. Estimating their density by the force of their attraction, which is but small, and considering the vast distances to which they stretch away beyond the genial influence of the sun, we may conclude they are not habitable bodies. They have no rotation like the planets, and though they retire to a great distance from the source of light, are not attended with moons. The want cannot be said to be compensated by their near approach to the fixed stars, for this is disproved by their periodical returns. The absence of moons, their want of rotation, and particularly their number, all certify that they are a distinct class of bodies, and not planets, whose course has been deranged. Since they were to exist, provision has been made against their *interfering* with other



parts of the system. The great eccentricity of their orbits makes them liable to be disturbed by the attraction of the planets; but in order to avoid this as far as might be proper for the long duration of the system, the planets revolve nearly in the same plane, while the comets are dispersed all over the heavens, stretch away to such distances as render their visitations very occasional, and afford an opportunity of so diversifying their periods of return, that a number shall not be passing at once to the sun. They move slowest when farthest from the sun, and pass so rapidly when near any of the planets, or in the region that might most affect them, that the effect of their attraction is not to be feared. Actual collision alone is to be dreaded, and this, though possible, is exceedingly improbable even for a long course of ages.\*

“ The acceleration of the mean motion of the moon, which was supposed to augment continually, is found to be a secular equation of a very long period, which compensates itself in the course of ages, alternately increasing from nothing to its maximum, and diminishing to nothing again.” The acceleration of the moon seemed to argue a constant diminution of her distance from the earth, and gave countenance to the idea that the planetary orbits were diminishing, and that there was a tendency among all the bodies of our system to descend to the centre of gravity, where their union must terminate the present order of nature,—a catastrophe sung by Darwin;† but the destiny of nature is more sublime. Whatever be its duration, imperfection in its mechanism will not be its ruin.

Certain perturbations take place among the satellites of the primary planets, from their necessary action upon one another. These have been investigated in the case of Jupiter’s satellites,

\* It was feared the comet of 1744 would disturb the planet Mercury; but it was found that when nearest the planet it was twice as near the sun. So no disaster ensued.—See EDINBURGH REVIEW of *La Place’s System of the World*, which the author had not the opportunity of studying otherwise. Yet *La Place* is said to have continued a sceptic!

† Roll on, YE STARS! exult in youthful prime,  
Mark with bright curves the printless steps of time;  
Near and more near your beamy cars approach,  
And lessening orbs on lessening orbs encroach;—  
Flowers of the sky! ye too to age must yield,  
Frail as your silken sisters of the field!  
Star after star from Heaven’s high arch shall rush,  
Suns sink on suns, and systems, systems crush,  
Headlong, extinct, to one dark centre fall,  
And Death and Night, and Chaos mingle all!

*Bot. Gar.* vol. i. cant. iv. l. 379.



as affording the best facilities ; and they are found to be a system of bodies connected by remarkable relations and inequalities, which their mutual action would maintain for ever, if left to itself. This action also changes every moment the position of their orbits, so that the nodes of these orbits have retrograde motions whose periods are all determined.\*

Though we know not the use of Saturn's Ring so as to be able to point out ulterior design, yet no less than seven independent circumstances were requisite to its existing as it is, without being displaced ; all these we observe, and they afford a cogent proof of design in its structure. In particular, La Place has demonstrated that there is an irregularity in the form of the ring, and that this irregularity of a certain magnitude, neither too great nor too small, was *absolutely necessary* to prevent the ring from falling down on the planet.†

Not to protract the enumeration, we only notice, that the shape of the earth as an oblate spheroid, formerly remarked as an arbitrary conformation, tends to prevent the ocean from overflowing the land. It would otherwise rise, till the increase of depth made up for the diminution of its gravity within the tropics by the centrifugal force. La Place has shewn farther, that the motion communicated to the mass of water which surrounds our globe by the action of the sun and moon, will never increase to any undue elevation of the ocean, because the undulation of the waters continually tends to diminish from their gravitation to the earth ; and that thus the equilibrium of the sea will be stable,—it will not rise nor will it subside, so long as the density of its waters is below the mean density of the earth.

III.—Were we now to descend from this survey of the universe, and planetary system, to the economy of Nature around us, what new and admirable arrangements would rise into view, all equally directed to the preservation of diversified yet harmonious co-existence. One meets the necessities generated by another, and those again, to which the former gives birth, are so appropriately met by other arrangements, that the circle of perfection is traced without either flaw or unseemly deviation. The classes of beings, animate or inanimate, are not too numerous, yet sufficiently varied to constitute the several kingdoms of nature ; none of them are, like pure spirits, unfitted

\* See EDINBURGH ENCYCL. *Astronomy*.

† ECLECTIC REVIEW of *Connaissance de Temps* for 1811. Sept. 1810.

for connexion with the earth, yet they terminate in an order of intelligent beings capable of presiding over the rest,—beings in whom matter and spirit are conjoined, attached by their bodies to the terrestrial fabric, by their spirits fitted for recognising and serving a Deity. While the characteristic distinctions are preserved, the several classes are connected by intermediate links, through which the gradations of life and diversified existence may be traced. Then, what a wonderful scheme of dependencies, reciprocations, provisional processes, and subservient interests, pervades and unites the whole, without blending the several departments. The chemical powers, the vegetative vis, the rational and moral faculties, have all their province; and where the end could not be gained, either with propriety or with sufficiently certain effect, by any of these, the department of instincts fills up the chasm. In the ordinary processes of nature, there are many laws which, though they continue to operate steadily at all times, are yet necessarily influenced and modified by various circumstances, which sometimes augment, sometimes diminish their action, and not unfrequently give it a new direction; and no small part of that beautiful economy of nature, which either presses itself on our notice, or surprises the intelligent inquirer in almost every discovery he makes, arises just from the harmonizing effects of these reciprocations.

And now, is there no evidence of fore-thought in the structure and arrangements of a system so multiform and complex, yet so perfectly consistent,—a system from which apparent perplexities constantly vanish, just in proportion to its development by the progress of science,—a system so admirably fitted for exhibiting in strong characters the diversities of possible existence, and combining them in every relation of utility without the smallest confusion? Was there no prior conception of the sum total to be formed? No contemplation of necessities and expedients? No calculation of the results of general laws in different dispositions of their subjects, and of the ways and means by which perturbation might be avoided, harmony produced, and the preservation of the whole ensured?—No such forecast as must prove an Intelligent First Cause, and at the same time be understood in a manner worthy of the Deity?

Let Reason assume her place,—and surveying all the proofs of Volition, Design, and Contrivance, with which the universe

abounds,—pondering not only the necessity of forecast in order to the construction and permanent ordination of such a mighty fabric, but the evidence of it, the impressions of plan which everywhere appear,—let her acknowledge the finger of a God, the workmanship of a Deity,—and bow before him who seeth the end from the beginning, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working,—“ For of him, and to him, and through him are all things, to whom be glory for ever. Amen.”

## SECT. IV.

### EVIDENCES OF POWER, WISDOM, AND GOODNESS.

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It would not be difficult to shew by reasoning *a priori*, that as a self-existent being must be intelligent and free, so he must of necessity possess infinite power, wisdom, and goodness,—comprehending under the attribute of goodness, benignity, as well as supreme moral excellence.\*

Following, however, the method adopted, we shall suppose the sceptic to demand the evidence of facts, and from this region shall select so much as may be deemed sufficient, in connexion with all that has already been adduced, for establishing the existence of those attributes which necessarily belong to the idea of a God ; and that with a view to our subsequent scrutiny of objections drawn from the same region against every form of demonstrating this primary and most important truth.

Since minds, even the most candid and most willing to be satisfied, may be liable to occasional doubts, we are deeply interested in giving every fair advantage to the sceptic, either as a real opponent, or a figurative character, in whom the propensity to doubt is personified. Let us suppose him then to insist, “ That besides the bare proof of contrivance, specific proofs of power, wisdom, and goodness are requisite, since contrivance demonstrative of an intelligent agent may appear where such proofs are wanting, contrivance discovering itself simply in adapting means to an end, which may be done, while the

\* For the prosecution of line of argument, see DR. CLARKE'S *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*.

means chosen are not the best, while, of all possible means, the fittest are not in the power of the agent, while even those which he is compelled to adopt are so partially in his power that he cannot use them to the best advantage, and while the obvious end is not the most worthy or beneficial."

Perhaps in thus taking his ground with a view to future objections, the sceptic might farther attempt to fortify himself by insinuating, "That as the direct affirmation of power, wisdom, and goodness necessarily implies an intelligent agent, to ascribe the existing phenomena of nature at once to a distinct independent power, or to assert that they indicate wisdom and goodness, must be deemed preposterous and next to a begging the question." This suggestion, we must be allowed to say, is a mere speculative refinement, which can have no other object than to denounce as absurd all demonstration of a Deity *a posteriori*, and which therefore can never be approved by sound reason while the evidence of facts in any other case is deemed conclusive. Nor can the sceptic expect that the proofs already adduced of an Intelligent First Cause, to whom such attributes as power, wisdom, and goodness may be ascribed,—proofs therefore preparatory in the due order of argument to the consistent demonstration of such attributes,—should now be totally surrendered. This were an indulgence, which, disposed as we are to self-love, we ought resolutely to deny even to our own minds.

Nevertheless, to remove every appearance of begging the question, let us reserve for our last proposition on this section the amount of our previous reasoning, and proceed thus: The most determined atheist cannot, without forfeiting all claim to candour, refuse to survey the various departments of nature, and give his decision whether in these there be not facts and appearances corresponding to *the known results* of power, wisdom, and goodness, and which consequently must be considered as indicating these attributes, supposing an agent to exist in whom they might reside;—that there are such facts or phenomena, shall be our first proposition; the second, that they are sufficient to prove the Agent divine, or such a Being as must be God, according to the idea which right reason forms of a Deity; and the last, that the Intelligent Agent already demonstrated, is the Being in whom these attributes may reside, and to whom all the evidences of them must be traced. Since, however, the object of this section will be best attained by the removal of objections and solution of difficulties, which belongs to another department of the essay, it shall be enough to have sketched out what we deem the most unexceptionable

plan of demonstration, with such hints as may show the possibility of filling it up to a vast extent.

I. THE UNIVERSE SO FAR AS KNOWN PRESENTS PHENOMENA SUFFICIENT TO ESTABLISH A PROOF OF POWER, WISDOM AND GOODNESS,—supposing an agent to exist in whom these attributes might reside.

It will be granted that only a part of the universe is known. But since the sceptic has no means of proving that what is unknown is greatly, or at all, dissimilar to what is known,—since the progress of discovery has not detected any dissimilitude between what is within the sphere of unassisted observation, and what can be ascertained only by instruments or mental calculation,—since what is but beginning as yet to show itself to philosophic inquiry, cannot be pronounced anomalous in regard to what has been fully investigated,—since, on the contrary, all our researches only disclose homogeneous facts in the operation of the same general laws,—it appears reasonable that we judge of the whole by what falls within the compass of discoveries already made, and that any argument founded on the state of the universe, so far as known, be held satisfactory. It was not indeed to be expected, that such a being as man should be able to descry the utmost limits of the universe; much less, that every human being should be able to grasp the whole in his mind, to understand fully its structure, and the relations of its several parts. If, therefore, this had been requisite to the acknowledgment of a Deity, man though fitted both physically and morally for adoration, obedience, and responsibility, must have been exempted from all these by his very circumstances, as truly as the inferior animals who want the fitness; and the Deity, even supposing him to exist, must have lost his design in the peculiar adaptation of the rational creature. To hold that the creature must be deified in point of knowledge or capacity, in order to glorify the Creator by the confession and obedience incumbent on a creature, would be plainly absurd. But this is the absurdity on which the atheist would at bottom proceed, should he object our necessary limitation by structure, capacity, and place, against the possibility of ascertaining the being and attributes of a Deity; for although it should be urged that the creature might have been formed with capacities for comprehending the whole universe, and placed in a situation the most advantageous for this purpose, yet (not to mention that this, if requisite, would have rendered it impossible for the Deity himself to

diversify the powers and kinds of his rational creatures) the idea of finitude essential to the creature must still recur, as the disqualifying property emancipating the subject from all moral obligation. It remains, therefore, that we rest in the indications afforded by such parts of the universe as are within the reach of our knowledge. And since common observation may be held sufficient for discerning those indications of wisdom, power, and goodness, with which the idea of moral obligation is inseparable from the least intelligent of rational beings, standing closely connected, if we at any time pass beyond the sphere of common observation by appealing to the discoveries of science, it is not because these are deemed essential to the purpose in view, but merely to show that nothing is detected by them incompatible with the argument founded on common observation,—that, on the contrary, difficulties are solved, the indications multiplied, and the force of the argument greatly increased.

After these remarks, which ought to be kept in mind not only on this part of the subject, but in all our reasoning from facts, and which admit an application to the moral as well as the natural world, we proceed, on the plan formerly announced, to confirm our first proposition.

In the system of the universe, facts corresponding to the known results of ACTIVE POWER as distinguished from gravitation, from the forces of matter originally inert, and from the mere capacity of exertion, are everywhere so apparent, as have already been so fully demonstrated in the projected and rotatory motions of the planets, the modifications of matter, the diversity of arbitrary conformations, the mechanical structure of animated bodies, and other particulars,—that to dwell farther upon them at present would only be to fatigue the attention of the reader. The arrangements of a Deity in purpose or plan, may be inscrutable; but those arrangements which we have been contemplating in the preceding section, proofs of design and contrivance, appear in the existing system of nature,—which in relation to a First Cause comes under the idea of work done, or effects produced. And if the magnitude of a work impress the idea of power, how vast are many of the celestial orbs, even taking our globe for the standard! how overwhelming to human conception the expansion of the universe of systems in every direction! But in the works of art, *minuteness* combined with elegance, is as truly as magnitude, though in a different way, demonstrative of power. As are not insects, with all the untold species of animalculæ, e

amples of elegant minuteness in the kingdom of nature? Many of the latter entirely elude our organs of sight; yet these, when scrutinized by the help of a microscope, present the most perfect symmetry of parts, under almost every possible form. We behold with astonishment an adaptation of these parts, in common with those of the largest animals, to the purposes of life,—limbs or other means of locomotive power, eyes and other organs of sense suited to the element in which they reside, a heart, a stomach, an intestinal canal, an apparatus for securing the requisite supplies of food, an apparatus often singularly constructed, and not easily explained; in some, for example, a wheel, which by rapid gyrations produces a vortex sufficient to attract to the mouth the particles swimming about, yet by some wonderful contrivance prevents the waters of the eddy from descending into the gullet with the particles gorged. In some of the larger insects whose bodies are transparent, the wonders of interior organization are laid open to the inspection of every individual, and the naked eye may perceive the vital fluid projected through one channel from the tail to the thorax by the constant playing of the heart, and descending again in crystal globules through the trunk to the tail, where it seems the vital functions are performed. How beautiful and highly finished the exterior decorations of others,—the feathery down with which they are covered, or the glossy and radiant hues with which their bodies are gilded or japanned,—their net-work of eyes,—the fabric of their wings and antennæ! Let the most delicate and powerful instruments be employed, no flaw can be detected in these or in any of the works of nature,—nothing rude or inelegant. The utmost efforts of human power have not been able to give such polish or perfection to the works of art.—Besides magnitude and minuteness, *variety* itself may be justly regarded as an indication of power. And to what an extent is this displayed in the system of nature! To speak only of animated beings, what variety of form as well as of kind do we perceive among them? and of form in the individuals of the same species, so similar, yet so truly discriminated by some peculiarity of size, of colour, of feature, of expression, or of temper. Withdraw the models of nature, and what sculptor or painter would be able to exhibit, in his works, such an endless diversity as appears in the countenance alone.\*

\* “ Though every thing must be alike easy to an infinite and almighty Being, yet according to human apprehension, it appears extremely wonderful that we find almost without exception in those specks of life, (insects and animal-



The principal effects of WISDOM are, admirable arrangement, with all requisite provisions for ensuring the perpetuity of the work,—much accomplished at little expense,—and in the best form, showing that the proper means were selected and fitly applied. Facts in the system of Nature, corresponding to these, and all other results of wisdom, everywhere obtrude themselves on the most careless observer. We found it impossible to trace the bare proof of design and contrivance, without being struck with indications of admirable arrangement; and the very detail of provisions against the perturbation or destruction of the order of nature, which belonged to that proof, and could not be given without evincing their propriety and sufficiency, has anticipated all that is requisite for the demonstration of wisdom in this department. To show that much is accomplished at the least expense, in the shortest way, and with the happiest effect, we shall not enter into a long induction of particulars. Let the appeal be to the few following facts. 1. The manifold use to which the single law of gravitation is applied. Suppose gravity essential to matter, though the existence and operation of the law could not in that case be avoided, how admirably has the planetary system been adjusted to both for preserving the respective distances of the globes, maintaining their annual revolutions, producing the vicissitude of seasons, attaching secondaries to their primaries, effecting the libration of the secondaries, correcting inequalities, and ever harmonizing the whole. 2dly, The atmosphere is at once by its composition the cherisher of life, by its elevation the medium of light, by its density the organ of solar heat, and both in these and other respects adapted to a great variety of other purposes in the economy of nature. This is an example of a different description from the former. Here we discern nothing like original necessity requiring correspondent adaptations. The composition, elevation, and density of the atmosphere were all contingent; but the mass as it is, exhibits the result to be expected from an all-comprehensive wisdom, which accomplishes much with the utmost ease, and in the best manner, by the simplest means. None of the gases of which atmospheric air

culæ), whose minuteness renders them almost imperceptible to the eye of man, a greater number of members to be put in motion, an apparatus more complex and curious, a plan seemingly of deeper contrivance; in short, more elegance and workmanship (if the term may be excused) in the composition, more beauty and ornament in the finishing, than are seen in the enormous bulk of the elephant, the crocodile, and the whale." These last are indicative of power in another form." *BAKER'S Employment for the Microscope, Part ii. Introduction.*

is composed, is by itself fitted for the purposes of life ; yet by their combination in certain proportions, the fluid is adapted to the vital constitution, not only of man, but of every animated being. It furnishes on each inspiration the proper quantity of oxygen, neither more nor less, which the volume drawn into the lungs of the land-animals, or passing the gills of fishes, or surrounding the spiracula of insects, ought to furnish according to the constitution of these several classes of beings, who are all equally dependent on its presence. Vegetables too, of every description, imbibe its cherishing influence. Their leaves are found to answer the purpose of lungs ; while by some process not yet satisfactorily explained, they also give out the vital gas in vast abundance to repair the loss occasioned by the respiration of animated beings, that thus in the very region (next the earth) where the atmosphere is most apt to be impoverished, it may be regenerated, and its salubrity maintained ;—a provision resembling that of the saline quality of the ocean, so requisite to prevent the otherwise unavoidable putridity of the waters.

We formerly noticed the uniformity of the mode of generation ; and can we forbear to remark here the uniformity that appears in the manner of sustaining both animal life and the vegetative vis in all their respective subjects,—particularly the common necessity of air, and the manifest relation which all the different organs formerly mentioned, have to the extraction of its vital principle ? But the *simplicity* of the means by which many effects are produced, as an indication of wisdom, is our present theme. And not to dwell on the adaptation of air for the nourishment of fire, the occasional production of water, and various other purposes, let us remark how much its contexture and elevation contribute to the phenomena of light. Transparent and viewless, it readily transmits to us the rays of the sun, while it unites them at the same time so as to magnify the quantity of heat. But this is not all, “ it both causes and continues the day, which though it be a necessary consequence of the sun’s irradiation upon the atmosphere, is rather the work of the latter, than the production of the sun himself.” Suppress the atmosphere, and then the refracting medium being lost, the rising of that luminary would not be preceded, nor his setting followed, by twilight. His effulgence would burst on the pained eyeball at once, and the moment he sank beneath the horizon it would be as suddenly extinguished. No aurora would announce his approach, no evening would prolong the advantages of day and gently usher in the night. The

very distinction indeed between day and night would scarcely exist; for even while traversing his path in the heavens, the source of day would be shorn of his diffusive splendour, and exhibit the appearance only of a flaming orb upon a mournful canopy,—a black abyss of darkness, undispelled, where the stars would be equally visible with himself. His rays would only shed a dismal glare on a few objects around the spectator, like a distant fire blazing on the darkness of the night. It is the atmosphere that lifts the azure arch over our head; and conjoins the many-coloured pencils of light into that uniform splendour, that white illumination, so grateful to the organs of vision, and so wonderfully adapted for displaying the beauties of colour in other objects, and indeed for unveiling expansively all the beauties of nature. This it is that gradually loses itself to the eye in the cerulean blue of the heavens.

Between our atmosphere and the atmospheres of other planets, a great difference has been discovered both in density and height; but we know from experience, that the ratio of both in our atmosphere is fitly accommodated to our distance from the sun. The variations in weight of which it is susceptible, and its great elasticity, not only render it capable of being applied to many useful purposes of art, but wondrously multiply its utilities in the general economy of nature. In a summary view, the air which promotes vegetation, which reinvigorates the vital fluid, which provides for us the incalculable benefits dependant on ignition, and to which we are indebted for the cheerful light of day, presents at the same time the fittest element for the motion of winged animals, is the proper region for the production and action of many useful meteors, and the best medium for the propagation of sound, the elevation and suspension of odours, the formation of vapours, of winds, of snow, of rain, and of dew. Without it, the peculiar structure of the feathered race, and of thousands of insects, the faculty of speech in man, the organs of voice and of song in other animals, and the senses of hearing and smelling, had been all equally useless; there had been “no balancings of the clouds;” no restoration of the arid or exhausted soil.

There is, further, a certain *meliority* in the whole constitution of things celestial and terrestrial, which no thinking being can fail to perceive. The general disposal of all is clearly the most advantageous for amalgamating properties, laws, and relations, otherwise discordant, into one

harmonious system, duly adjusted to ulterior objects. The harmony we have already considered ; and it is the last idea, the happy adaptation of the whole system to ulterior objects, we presently advert to. This evinces the meliority of much in the economy of nature, which may seem to be so necessarily the result of physical causes, that it could not be prevented, supposing them to exist. Cold, for example, must necessarily convert vapour into snow, and water into ice. But this is a happy effect in relation to man considered as an inhabitant of the temperate and especially of the polar regions, which are so long deprived of the genial influence and cheering rays of the sun. In warmer climates the brilliancy of snow and the bright reflections of icy plains and mountains, are not needed to compensate for deficiency of light ; and the heat of the climate prevents the bad effects which heavy rains in winter would obviously have in colder regions. Snow rests on the cherished soil like a thick covering of the finest wool.\* Say, on the other hand, that sea and land-breezes, monsoons, and tropical rains, must necessarily arise from the near presence of the sun, are they not at the same time happily fitted both for tempering the heat of his presence, and giving full play to its influence, and thus rendering that otherwise destructive power conducive to the purposes of life and of health, as the source of a most luxuriant vegetation ? The electric fluid when accumulated over the equator is combined with the atmosphere, which there rises to its greatest height, and thus serves by its presence and the storms it produces, to purify the air. But if that fluid naturally tends to flow off at the poles, and to kindle into the *aurora borealis* and *australis* in the superior region, which it easily gains as the stratum of air is diminished by the rotation of the earth, this phenomenon is evidently preferable in climates long left to the darkness of winter. It is greatly useful as a source of light, often equal to that of the moon ; and then, its expansive splendour, its singular yet pleasing motions, the magnificence of its forms, and the variety and brilliancy of its colours, compensate, in some measure, for the want of that

\* That snow, in such regions, is preferable to the tropical deluges of rain, DARWIN remarks,—1st, Because as the winter is longer, snow dissolves gradually, and thus carries away less from the soil ; 2dly, Because it protects vegetables from the severity of the frost, since it is always in a state of thaw where it is in contact with the earth. The heat of the earth being about 48, and that of thawing snow 32, the vegetables are preserved in a temperature of about 40. *Bot. Gar.* vol. i. note xii. But for their covering of snow, the power of frost would rend the rocks and crumble down the mountains of the frigid zone.

beauty which is shed on the heavens and the earth by the radiance of the sun in more favoured regions of the globe. Does cold invest with fur the animals exposed to its power, but unable to provide for their own defence? and does heat again in warm countries convert wool into hair, render hair itself rigid and thin, prevent its growing on many animals, or cause it fall off?—all this we perceive to be better, than if the case had been inverted, or no such changes produced. The same observation may be made on the effect of the solar heat in darkening and blackening the human skin. Does the cold of approaching winter contribute its part to strip the trees of their foliage? There is also a meliority in this effect, as a fit preparation for the season of diminished light and of storms. Expose the trees of the orchard or the forest to the fury of the tempest, with all the resistance which their leaves would present, they would be torn up by the roots. Subject them to the pressure of the snow, which these leaves would amass, their branches would be broken down, and their beauty destroyed not to revive. Then the humidity, the coolness, and the shade, which the heat and splendour of summer render so desirable, can well be spared in a season like winter, which is sufficiently moist, and which evidently requires that the quantity of heat and light should rather be increased than diminished.

Here, however, the sceptic may be disposed to remind us, that the constitution of nature must necessarily have been just what it is in all these respects, and others of a similar kind, whether it had been advantageous or not, and that therefore the meliority in point of advantage is merely accidental. Grant this first position for a moment, still the ulterior objects to which the meliority relates, and but in relation to which the idea indeed would not exist, were not necessarily such as they are. Suppose the effects of heat and cold necessary and unalterable, the constitution of man and of the inferior animals was entirely contingent. The human eye might have been formed so as to depend on no compensation for the diminution of light, the human skin so as to receive no impression from the solar rays, or if any, so as to be bleached rather than darkened. But we have not forgotten, that even as to what may be deemed the necessary and unavoidable effects of heat and cold in most of the instances mentioned, their adjustment to the general economy of our globe depends on the inclination of its axis, which is plainly contingent, or might have been otherwise, since a great diversity is found on this head in the planetary system. In some instances, also, the necessity of the effect is not abso-

lutely certain. Who can say whether the effects of heat and cold on the clothing of animals, might not have been inverted? Why might not the rays of the sun, which promote vegetation, have also tended (as heat does in some cases) to promote the growth of hair, that vegeto-animal substance with which they are clothed? The fall of the leaf is not to be entirely ascribed, as a necessary effect, to the first rigours of winter, for trees have a natural predisposition to part with their foliage. And it is not a little remarkable, that those only retain their verdure which are pliant, formed for yielding to the blast, or whose leaves make little resistance, and by their glossy surface, or needle-like shape, throw off the snows that would otherwise oppress them.\*

More fully, however, to destroy the force of the first position advanced by our sceptic, facts may be adduced sufficient to justify our ranking the meliority apparent in nature among the phenomena which correspond to the known results of wisdom and not of necessity. How vastly preferable is the Copernican, the real system of the planets, to the Ptolmean, founded only on appearance! There was no necessity, we have seen in a former part of this essay, that could determine the only luminous body to the centre, yet it is better it should be there than in any of the planetary orbits, better that a moon should be a satellite than a primary, and better that the number of satellites should increase rather than diminish with the distance of the primaries from the sun. The motion of the earth, in its annual orbit, has been calculated to be fifty times swifter than its motion of diurnal rotation. Was there any original or absolute necessity for this in the nature of things? It is plainly fit and proper, however, since had it been accelerated doubly, so as to have performed the annual revolution in six months, the seasons would have been deranged, and the cold of winter would have overtaken the harvest ere the fruits had been ripened. Had it been retarded in the same ratio, the consequence must have been equally fatal. There would have been but one harvest for two years in the temperate zones, which, with the same population, would have been totally inadequate to the consumpt of food. If only twelve diurnal rotations had taken place in the course of the year as now fixed, then every day or period of light would have been equal to half a month,

\* The holly, the yew, and a variety of firs.—Yet that the retaining of their foliage is not the necessary consequence of their structure, or of the resin which renders them tough and pliant, appears from the larch's annually shedding its needle-shaped leaves.



which would neither have been proportioned to the strength of the human being for the business of life, nor provided for the requisite repair of bodily and mental vigour, according to our present constitution.—Is it not better, too, every way more advantageous in fact, and therefore more desirable, that the ocean should be in a state of constant undulation, that even the atmosphere should have its flux and reflux, and that both should be frequently agitated by storms, than that the latter should have rested in moveless repose on the former, or a perpetual calm have reigned both at sea and on land?\*

Turn to another subject, ponder the position of the limbs, features, and organs of sense in the human body. Not only is it preferable on the score of beauty and symmetry, to any other position, it is confessedly the fittest for answering the respective purposes of the several parts.†

To give only another instance of this universal meliority, and one which may lead us on to the contemplation of goodness,—the vital motions, as was formerly remarked, are not dependent on the will. How infinitely better is this than if, like other motions, they had been left to be maintained and regulated by it! Assuredly they would have been forgotten or neglected; and not only when life was surrendered in humble submission to our lot, but in every instance of death, we must have been our own executioners, or in some way accessory to our decease. The power of quitting our present existence at pleasure would have been often abused; pride or terror would have employed it for the purpose of anticipating all public executions, and defeating the administration of justice; we should never have dared to venture on the refreshment of sleep,—the thing

\* DE LAMANON, the companion of PEYROUSE, ascertained by the barometer, that there is a flux and reflux in the atmosphere which rises and falls about 100 feet, the highest rise in the sea never reaching twenty. PEYROUSE'S *Voyage*, vol ii. 237.

† Had the eyes, for example, been near the lower extremities, how much had that tender organ been exposed to danger, and how greatly had the extent of the visible horizon been abridged. So on of the rest. See SOCRATES' admirable discourse on this subject in the *Memorabilia*. To those who plead, in opposition to the idea of a directive hand, that all things must of necessity and by physical causes of unavoidable operation, have been just as they are, we may propose, in the Socratic manner, one question out of many which might be put, on the very head of beauty and symmetry,—whence is it that though the hair of the head and the beard advances to a considerable length, and continues to grow spontaneously, that of the eyebrows and eyelashes, projecting in different directions, always continues short, soon acquires its full size, the only dimensions that would be convenient, and never vegetates more? On the utility of Two Eyes, besides their contributing to beauty, see HOOKER'S *Rational Recreations*, article Dioptrics.

indeed had been impossible; and if this control over the vital motions had not been restricted to rational beings, but connected with life generally and imparted to all animals, either no animal would have died but by force, and thus the different classes would have multiplied to a most inconvenient extent, or, which is most likely, the whole race of irrational beings would soon have perished through their own incapacity of attending to the task of existing.

To proceed with the proof of our position, facts corresponding to the known results of GOODNESS everywhere press themselves on observation and experience. By goodness, as distinguished from the *το πρῶτον* and the *το καλον*, which constitute the excellence of a work indicative of wisdom, is meant the principle of benevolence in the operator. This must always bear a relation to animated beings, since, without the faculty of sensation, no being can be the proper object of benevolence, or of its manifestation in deeds of beneficence. Now it must be obvious, that the very meliority of which we have been treating, respects not merely the happy application of means, conducive to the excellence of the work, and thus evidential of wisdom, but the positive *advantage* also of all the animated beings with which we are acquainted, coinciding in this view with the known demonstration of Goodness. The specimens adduced exhibit *beneficial* arrangement.

Whether upon the supposition of a different relative constitution of the world and the animated beings upon it, the system complexly taken might not have been better than it is, or afforded a larger measure of happiness, is an inquiry which can nowise affect either what has been stated or what remains to be advanced. If the atheist will grant an omnipotent Being, we will grant that no limits can be set to his power but by the necessary finitude of its subjects; we will grant farther, that our world may not exhibit the utmost of what Omnipotence could do in communicating happiness, or rendering animated beings susceptible of it. But we would at the same time remind the atheist, that such a Being cannot be under the necessity of rendering all his creatures susceptible of the highest degrees, or even of the highest species of happiness, since this would preclude him both from diversifying the orders of animated beings, and also from variously modifying the forms of happiness by making some beings subservient to others,—all must be cast into the same mould, and all immediately dependant on himself to the exclusion of every subordinate channel of enjoyment. If this would involve a contradiction, and if it



be none to suppose that a Deity may diversify the orders of animated beings, (surrendering some, for example, to instinct, endowing others with intellect in various degrees, forming some with fewer and others with more organs of sense, or powers of activity,) neither will it be any contradiction to suppose, that he may have made a diversity of systems, and among these such a one as our planetary system, or such a world as this among the diversity of worlds which belong to that system, though it may not be the highest effort of omnipotent Goodness. The meliority in this case must be restricted to the relative constitution of the world and its animated beings, and the sole question is, whether they being such as they are, the present arrangement of all things be not better adapted to their exigencies and capacities, than if it had been different? This we have already evinced, and in so far the proof of meliority bears upon Goodness as truly as wisdom.

One other caveat we add on the subject. The meliority of our system must respect its original constitution; for it may be possible that the state of the animated beings in our world might have been better than it is, but the disadvantages which belong to it, and which diminish the proportion of possible happiness, may have been *superinduced* by the conduct of free agents. Such agents there are, and such, supposing a Deity, must be responsible; in virtue of this responsibility, again, if they shall err and become immoral, their happiness ought to be marred; and then, in order to its being marred in such a degree as might comport with a state of forbearance, a certain derangement of the original constitution, affecting even the beings which are not responsible, was absolutely necessary. The consideration of this point, however, belongs to the solution of difficulties, where it may be shewn that the present and ultimate advantages of this derangement more than counterbalance its disagreeable effects. In the mean time, as it was not to be supposed that a Deity would leave himself “without a witness” of his goodness, let us advert to those proofs that *remain*, and not only render it probable that some derangement of the original state of things has taken place, but even correspond to the results of mercy or compassion, by their evident relation to present disadvantages.

Is it to be expected of goodness, that, according to its power, it will *multiply* its subjects? Then, there is no void,—no part of the world left destitute of beings suited to its nature,—nothing suffered to run to waste, without ministering in one form or another to sensitive and rational enjoyment. We behold

beasts fitted to range over the surface of the earth, reptiles to burrow in its bowels, fish to replenish the waters, fowls and insects to occupy the air. Every plant, every substance capable of ministering to animal existence has its appropriate inhabitants. Does goodness impart, or improve and augment *the power* of enjoying happiness? No animated being is devoid of that power, and the circumstances in which those are placed to whom an increase of it might be desirable, either tend to augment it, or at least afford them facilities for improving it. Even instinct, though merely a blind impulse, is closely connected with sensations of pleasure. This we know from experience, and may therefore conclude, that the animals who are wholly governed by it are not exiled from the pleasures of existence. It despoils them of none of their senses; it rather provides for the proper gratification of these, and unerringly directs to the best means of attaining the object. If again it belong to wisdom that the vital motions should not be dependant on the will of the animal, it no less belongs to goodness that such an incumbrance as the care of these motions would have been, interfering with every species of enjoyment, is thus happily removed. Strong too as the muscular action is in some of these motions, it requires no effort, it is not accompanied with pain, nor even with the least sense of instinctive exertion. Positive pleasure, indeed, is not connected with it; but this perhaps was impossible without the alternative of liability to pain, and at any rate would rather have been a disadvantage than a benefit upon grounds similar to those formerly mentioned. To show how varied the susceptibilities of happiness are, must surely be unnecessary; we therefore remark that goodness would not only impart the capacity, but also furnish *the sources*. And on this head, nature accommodates herself to more than the wants of animal existence. None of the beings inferior to man feel any defect, except such as may occasionally arise from the derangement already hinted and to be afterwards considered. Are they formed for particular climates? they may suffer by transportation to others, but their native climate will be found every way favourable to their health and support. Are they dependant, like the swallow, on some species of food which must fail with the season? their instinct prompts them to migrate to the regions where it abounds. It will be for man to consider whether he has not reason to be persuaded, on the very principle of analogy, that sufficient resources for all his intellectual and moral capacities of enjoyment originally existed,—and whether, suppos-

ing the derangement, which will thus be rendered not only probable but certain, something adapted to his present condition in these respects be not provided,—something corresponding to the known results of goodness when it operates in the form of mercy and compassion. The inquiry is deeply interesting. But not to anticipate, the atheist must necessarily deprive himself of one eminent source of happiness, the grateful recognisance of our high elevation in the scale of being, our numerous physical capacities, and all their correlate means of gratification. The facts in our natural history, though we had nothing else to appeal to, suggest the idea of *munificence*, the most certain as well as the most captivating indication of goodness.

Man cannot contemplate the vegetable world without being regaled with a thousand delights, of which other animals are wholly insensible. “The perfume of the rose, the brilliancy of the lily, the sweetness of the violet, the stately magnificence of the forest, successively catch his attention, and delight him. What other animal feels these agreeable sensations? None. Man alone is alike susceptible of the charms of beauty, the pleasures of harmony, and the luxury of perfumes. Many other animals possess the senses of seeing, hearing, and smelling, perhaps in much greater perfection than man, yet they are all incapable of those delicate sensations which are conveyed to his mind through organs of similar destination with theirs. Man feels that two distinct sensations are conveyed to his mind by means of the same organ, one of which may be called the mere animal, the other the harmonic sensation.”\* The first alone belongs to inferior beings, for even the notes of singing birds seem to be mere instinctive sounds, pleasing perhaps to those of the same species, though more probably intended to convey some kind of information either useful or necessary. The crowing of the cock must be ranked with the song of the lark, in regard to the purpose to be served to the species. At any rate, no bird save one seems to feel delight in listening to or copying the song of another; and although by dint of repe-

\* Perhaps the distinction may not be accurate. It serves, however, to render the idea apprehensible by the lowest capacity, that man has a perception of much more than the inferior animals. The patriotic and very useful author from whom the extract is given, illustrates by observing, “that though both these sensations are experienced by most men, some individuals have been found who are susceptible of the one (the animal) and not of the other (the harmonic,)”—as if these had been designed to show to the rest of mankind that the privilege is no necessary result of their physical constitution, but an arbitrary favour demonstrative of the goodness that would bless its objects beyond the mere exigencies of their state.

tition (or from the social principle) one bird may borrow the notes of another, it gives no indication of being gratified thereby, more than the parrot by the excellence of human speech which it may be brought to imitate. “The scream of the peacock and the song of the thrush, are to every appearance equally disregarded by the linnet or the wren; and the harsh notes of the raven are pleasing to the birds of the same kind, as the song of the nightingale to those of its kind. It is the human mind alone that is capable of being affected universally by melodious or discordant sounds howsoever produced.” The former cheer the rational being in the season of his labours, and seem to invite him to praise; the latter either warn him of danger, or answer other valuable purposes.\* Sounds productive of alarm are indeed to a certain degree understood by the inferior animals, such as the cries of the birds of prey, the roaring of the lion, the explosion of distant thunder. They feel nothing of the sublime in these sounds; they are warned however to flee to some covert for shelter,—and ought not this to be ascribed to benevolence as truly as the high susceptibilities of pleasure in the human race?

If some animals surpass us in the delicate sensibility of their olfactory organs, as the raven who smells his prey from afar, and the spaniel who traces the game by scent, it is merely to ensure for them the proper supply of food, or render them subservient to man. Nature, we shall say, seems to have aimed at nothing more with regard to them than the *useful*; but with respect to man there is superadded a higher faculty of pleasure, with all its corresponding objects, simply for the sake of *gratification*. The “flowers that appear on the earth” are not clothed with beauty for their own sakes; they are not “arrayed in glory superior to that of Solomon” for the sake of the inferior animals; for these animals, though they may perceive the colours of the flower, have no perception of the beauty with which it is adorned; they feel no pleasure in gazing upon it. The fragrance of the strawberry allures them not to taste it, for only the humblest of reptiles, more guided by instinct, doubtless, than the perception of fragrance, seeks to participate with man in this delicious fare. The mere preservation of the seeds of various plants and trees was evidently not the design of the rich fruits and exhilarating juices in which these seeds are enveloped, for these very fruits and juices occa-

\* See ANDERSON'S *Recreations*. Introduction to Natural History, p. 19—24.

sion the destruction of millions of seeds, the number of which was nowise necessary to the existence of the species. The pulp of the peach and the nectarine were formed for regaling the palate of man, the juice of the vine for cheering his heart, the milk of the cocoa for quenching his thirst. The flowers which embellish the habitation of man are careful not to show themselves all in company or at once. Spring, summer, and autumn present each their appropriate beauties, and give him leisure to examine and enjoy them. To what physical necessity in the general process of vegetation can it be imputed that the snow-drop, the violet, the tulip, the rose, and the sunflower, should know their respective months, and each in its season be attended with a harmonizing sisterhood of beauties? It is evidently for the advantage of man that the fruits of the field, wheat, barley, and so on, should grow ripe at once,—and this is their nature; but the fruits and flowers of a garden come forth in succession. In some species the fruits even of the same tree do not ripen all at once, there being often an interval of ten days or a fortnight between the ripening of the first and the last peach or nectarine,—shall we not say, because these and similar delicious fruits are not suited for being laid up in store, but intended for the present gratification of man, which is thus protracted for a time?

The manifold utility of some trees, such as the palm and cocoa, and the adaptation of these and many others (such as the water-bearing reeds, the citron, the orange and the lemon) to the places where they grow, or the necessities of the climate in which they are produced, must be known to every reader of natural history and travels. The cocoa-tree, most useful to sailors, grows by the side of the seas that are most navigated in the east and the south. A ship is there built of the wood, sails are made of its leaves, the mast of its trunk, cordage of the fibrous mass that surrounds its fruit, and the vessel is loaded with the nuts. Is it not a wonder of nature that this fruit should grow full of milk on dry sand and by the side of salt-water? Yet it is only on the shore that the tree which bears it arrives at its full stature and beauty. There are few in interior parts.—The banana is given to Asia, Africa, and America; India is full of them. In the same fervid regions, which render cooling fruits so necessary to the health of man, the foliage of the trees is remarkable. The fan-palm spreads its shade, and presents often in a single leaf a natural umbrella sufficient to cover ten men. The olive and the shea-tree present themselves in those regions where a deficiency of

pasture renders their fruit a valuable succedaneum for butter. We might expatiate in this manner on the bread-fruit, the vast multiplication of esculent roots, &c. We might ask, what necessary purpose in the mere vegetable economy could be answered by so richly loading the sugar-cane with its pleasant and nutritious juice? But the induction of particulars would be limited only by the boundaries of nature itself.

To look into the treasures of the mineral kingdom, and much more to attempt a survey of the other superabundant provisions for the physical and even the intellectual and moral capacities of man, to whom all nature is subordinated, would detain us too long from winding up the argument. We proceed, therefore, to our

**II.—Proposition, THAT THESE PHENOMENA, OR FACTS, WHICH SO MANIFESTLY CORRESPOND TO THE KNOWN RESULTS OF POWER, WISDOM, AND GOODNESS, ARE SUFFICIENT, IF AN AGENT TO WHOM THEY MAY BE ASCRIBED BE DEMONSTRABLE, TO PROVE THAT AGENT DIVINE, OR SUCH A BEING AS MUST BE GOD, ACCORDING TO THE IDEA WHICH RIGHT REASON FORMS OF A DEITY.**

This can require but little illustration. Nothing can be more evident than that the facts of which specimens have been given, are far beyond what we certainly know to be within the compass of power in human beings, that they include all the operations of physical laws, and that many of them lie also without the sphere of these. Besides man, whose structure, whose very vital motions and activities are comprehended in the facts, other intelligent agents are unknown to reason, and if we resort to Revelation, which admits the existence of such agents, it ascertains at the same time the extent of their powers by disclosing the province to which they are adapted,—but to this the atheist will not appeal, since the question must in that case be supposed to be decided, Revelation ever implying the existence of a Deity from whom it proceeds, and distinctly asserting his control over all the intelligences superior to man. The only point, therefore, to be determined is, whether the facts, supposing an agent to be found, would be sufficient to prove him *Omnipotent*. Now, to prove omnipotence, it cannot be requisite that an infinitude should exist either in magnitude or number of effects, for then the power must be supposed to have done its utmost, which (were the phrase intelligible or the idea conceivable) would imply a contradiction. It is enough, if the facts be such in number, variety, perfection, and stupendous

compass, as must indicate a power which nothing can withstand, and for which nothing is too great. Not only is this the case in relation to the facts we have detailed, but although merely a specimen, they are such, that if they be indeed the effects of an Active Cause and thus imputable to power, they will prove *that* power to be—1st, Extrinsic to the universe, which with all it comprehends is the subject exhibiting the facts,—2d, Creative, forming all things, determining their properties and relations, and adjusting their place, their movements, &c. to these or to the physical laws unavoidably arising from them,—3d, A power by which all things consist, for many of the facts, (*e. g.* the vital motions, and all those processes of nature which constantly provide for the support or gratification of animated beings), are so clearly beyond the range of mechanical laws, that the idea of a vast machine wound up and set agoing is clearly a chimera, a mere play upon words. The power, therefore, in the judgment of reason, must be Omnipotence, which proves the Agent divine.

Reflect next on the phenomena which correspond to the known results of Wisdom. The admirable arrangements in nature, with all their provisions for existence and perpetuity, are but gradually unfolding themselves to the human mind. Confessedly they could not be conceived or planned by any mind similar to that which has not yet fully explored them. Nor are they such as can be ascribed to any intellect, the existence of which reason may admit in the compass of the universe itself, or any intellect inferior to that of a Deity. They indicate a wisdom adequate to the conception of a plan which removes all obstacles to its own execution,—a wisdom which permanently forms of the most discordant materials a system the most harmonious in its sum and useful in all its details,—a wisdom which throughout the vast amplitude of range presented by that system, ever directs in the best and most advantageous manner all the minutiae of its several departments. This wisdom, right reason declares, can only be the wisdom of a God. It implies Omniscience. It proves the Agent divine.

Finally, who but a Deity could either impart the susceptibility of happiness in such diversity of form as it is found to exist in animated nature, or provide so liberally for its gratification? The idea of divine goodness is *All-sufficiency* positively directed to the happiness of the creature. The facts are sufficient to show that this is the character of the goodness they display, if an agent exist in whom the attribute may reside. And if the facts be sufficient to prove a disposition in such an



agent to bless all the different orders of animated beings, any anomalies that may occur, instead of being urged to disprove the divinity of the goodness, must be traced to peculiar causes connected with the good of the whole,—perhaps with other systems, or the universe at large.

Let it now be remarked, that the subjects which present the phenomena corresponding to the effects of Power, Wisdom, and Goodness, are *the same*, and together constitute but *one* general system. If therefore an Agent exist to whom any one of these attributes or properties may be ascribed, they must *all* belong to him. The identity of the facts renders it necessary that the Being to whom the power shall be traced, have also the glory of the wisdom and goodness manifested in them. And on the other hand, the wisdom and goodness, if admitted as the attributes of an active Agent, could not possibly have been displayed without his possessing the creative and omnipotent power which is the medium of their manifestation in the facts.

III. Our last proposition is, THAT THE INTELLIGENT FIRST CAUSE ALREADY DEMONSTRATED, IS THE AGENT IN WHOM THESE ATTRIBUTES MAY RESIDE, AND TO WHOM ALL FACTS DEMONSTRATIVE OF THEM MUST BE TRACED.

In this we concentrate the whole force of the argument,—combining our previous demonstration, Sects. II. and III., with the deduction of Evidences, and the decision of their character, in the preceding propositions of this section.

Even without reverting to our former demonstration, we might say, that as it is impossible to conceive how the facts appealed to in this section, and all the phenomena of nature, should so accurately correspond to the known results of active power, of wisdom, and of goodness, without supposing an Intelligent Agent, so reason is warranted to draw the conclusion from the very parallel traced, that such an Agent exists. Set him aside, and the enigma is utterly confounding; introduce him, and it ceases at once. Where there is a vast concurrence of circumstances, exactly coinciding with those which imply an Agent in all other cases, reason will be satisfied that it was *morally impossible* such a concurrence could have existed without a suitable agent. And in the case before us, the moral impossibility of the negative, which implies the *moral certainty* of the positive, is strengthened (as moral impossibility may be) by the wondrous amplitude of the range in which the coinciding circumstances occur, the uniformity and universality of



their occurrence, and the confessed superiority of the facts in which they present themselves to all the results of power, wisdom, and goodness among men.—This, we believe, is the compendious mode of reasoning by which common minds, often without being conscious of it, attain the persuasion of a Deity. It is the syllogism which alone can justify, and must therefore be supposed or involved in, the plan of all those writers who proceed at once to demonstrate the attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness, by facts.

But although we have endeavoured to analyze the argument for the sake of trying its merits or putting its validity most rigidly to the test, and although, upon this principle, we have only considered the phenomena of nature as *corresponding* to the known results of power, wisdom, and goodness, when a Being exists in whom these attributes may reside, and as sufficient *if such a Being exist*, in the present case, to prove him divine,—we did not mean, by this concession to accuracy, to surrender any part of our former demonstration, nor can it be reasonably demanded that we should, since nothing advanced in this section infers the subversion of the points already established. We are therefore entitled now to revert to the previous conclusions, and conjoin them with the present.

Thus then the general argument stands:—

1. There is a first cause of all things. (Sect. II.)—To this cause, therefore, must be traced all the facts corresponding to the known results of active power, wisdom, and goodness.

2. The First Cause is an Intelligent Being and a Voluntary Agent. (Sect. III.)—In him therefore the attributes of active power, wisdom, and goodness may reside.

3. This being the case, all the facts or phenomena not only may without implication be regarded as the results of these attributes, but must be considered as their proper effects, demonstrative of their real existence in the agent. Thus,

4. The requisite proof of his divinity, or of his being such an agent as right reason declares to be God, is completed. For, as it cannot be pretended that the First Cause, though proved, is merely some inexplicable self-originating physical force, since we have found him to be an Intelligent Being; so now, all that was requisite beyond the simple proof of intelligence is furnished. We can no longer be reminded,—that children discover intelligence by many contrivances, but often fail in selecting the best means for accomplishing the ends they propose, either from not understanding the properties of the

several means in their power, or not knowing the whole range of means that might be employed,—that thus through defect of wisdom, the end may be accomplished, but not at the least expense, in the shortest way, and with the happiest effect ;—that contrivance may be apparent, but the means not being at the option of the agent, or but partially under his control, the piece may remain unfinished, through defect of power ;—or that the end may be neither worthy nor beneficial, on the contrary highly detrimental, and therefore though contrivance be sufficiently obvious, the more apparent it is, the more decidedly will the whole scheme assume the aspect of malignity. None of all these hypotheses apply to the system of nature. It displays not merely power, but wisdom also, without which power must be useless, and goodness, without which both power and wisdom must be dangerous. The Agent has not shewn himself to be either unskilful or malignant, to disprove his divinity ; but the contrary, to an unexplored and inconceivable degree.

The requisite attributes which must now be considered as conjoined in the Agent are severally indicated by the facts, (Sect. IV. Prop. i.)

And then the facts are such as must establish the true Deity of the Agent to whom these attributes belong, by evincing an Omnipotent power, an inscrutable wisdom, and an all-sufficient goodness. (Sect. IV. Prop. ii.)

Thus do the several departments of proof conduct us to the grand conclusion, “ That there is a Being all-powerful, wise, and good, who made all things, and who still upholds the whole constitution of nature.”

## SECT. V.

### CONFIRMATORY REASONING FROM THE EXISTENCE OF REVELATION.

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WE have restricted our argument to the proofs afforded by the physical constitution of this world and the universe of which it is a part, because the sceptic must first be convinced of the being of a God, before he can consistently admit the idea of a moral state of things, and the relation of such perfections as holiness and justice to it, or the existence of a scheme of love and mercy for the restoration of the *guilty*.

But although the terms moral, holy, just, virtuous, guilty, can have no place in the system of the atheist, or at least no higher sense than that which is determined by what must be, in his reckoning, the merely conventional arrangements of social compact, for the purposes of government, trade, and civil intercourse,—we will allow that he may consistently avail himself of all the disorder which seems to deform the moral constitution of things in the world, and plead by way of *argumentum ad hominem*, that on the supposition of a Deity, this was not to be expected ; that the government of the Deity ought to have been more visible and effective ; that there ought to have been a more equal distribution of rewards and punishments, and so on. It is of this apparent disorder indeed that the sceptical disposition in every individual takes the greatest advantage. Much may be suggested by reason itself for the solution of difficulties ; but in order to obtain complete rest to our minds, we must resort to some superior source of information. We are accordingly allowed, in this Essay, to appeal to

*sacred books*, such as the common sense of mankind has judged to be necessary,—those nations to whom the art of writing was known, pretending to possess them,—others supplying their place by oral tradition,—and philosophers, who believed neither the one nor the other, deploring the want, but, at the same time, declaring that as some communication from the Deity was not only possible but probable, it might therefore be expected.

To introduce with propriety *those* books to which, in particular, we are allowed to appeal, and which alone can afford us effectual aid, we may endeavour to show previously what place their existence and contents may hold in the very argument for the Being of a God. This is the object of the present section ; and not to protract the discussion beyond all reasonable bounds, nothing more is intended than a mere outline of the method which may be successfully prosecuted by any candid inquirer.

Lest there should seem to be a *petitio principii* in conducting the inquiry, or something like reasoning in a circle, a different plan must be taken from that which belongs to the deistical controversy, in which the Being of a God is presupposed.

Let the atheist or sceptic, then, be conceived to urge the following considerations, and to put the following queries, which cannot be denied to be sufficiently appropriate in his mouth :—  
 “ If there be a Deity on whom all nature depends, it is not unreasonable to think that at one time or another he may have indicated his control over the laws of nature, or at least over the physical properties of their subjects ; and that he constantly regulates, and therefore interferes with, the moral constitution of things, which is not subject to these laws, but arises from the relation of free agents to himself. If, moreover, he hath formed rational beings for the express purpose of recognising his own existence, doing homage to him, and being blessed in his fulness, it may justly be expected, that he will admit them to special intercourse with himself, not restricting the manifestation of his glory merely to material objects,—and that since his all-sufficiency must enable him to communicate directly with the soul or intellectual powers, and to bless the rational creature with higher than merely temporal enjoyments, some such intercourse has actually existed. The being of a man may be known by his voice, or by his letters, as truly as by his works of art. Has, then, the Deity ever indicated his existence by any communications of this sort with mankind ? Has he ever proved his permanent active power, and his supremacy over the laws of nature or their subjects, by any supernatural

facts? Has he at any time evinced the existence of a real and absolute control over the moral world, by fortelling the actions of free agents, or the events dependent on these? Hath he spoken to the creatures who have ears to hear and minds to understand his words? Doth he continue to do so? or if this would not have been expedient, hath he appointed any channel by which his will may be notified to them, and blessedness also imparted in forms and degrees beyond all that can be afforded by the confessedly imperfect rudiments of nature?"

Upon these interrogatories we must beg leave to remark, that the proof of the being and perfections of God would be valid and sufficient, though no such interference with the laws of nature or their subjects had ever taken place, and though there were no channel of intercourse with the Deity but the works which ascertain his existence. It will be granted, however, that facts or authentic testimony, (for the facts are not expected to be permanent), attesting the intercourse referred to, must be strongly CONFIRMATORY of all the evidence afforded by the system of Nature.

In reply, therefore, we have to state,—1st, That it is possible to ascertain by the proper species of proof, that such suspension or temporary alteration of the ordinary constitution of nature as comes under the idea of *miraculous* interference, has really and in many instances taken place:—2dly, That *prophecies* exist to be either compared with history posterior to their date, or verified by present and future events:—3dly, That the *books* which record the miraculous interpositions, and contain the prophecies, profess to have proceeded from the immediate intercourse of a Deity with the human mind, and to exhibit to the whole human race a permanent revelation of his will. It becomes the sceptic therefore to inquire into the truth of the facts, the authenticity of the books, and the credibility of those by whom they were written.

The following propositions are so easily investigated, and have indeed been so fully demonstrated (though with a different object), that they deserve his most serious attention.

#### MIRACLES.

1st, Miracles in the sense proposed by the sceptic, and as usually defined, are possible.—They imply no contradiction.

2dly, They can only be occasional.—This is almost self-evident.

3dly, They can be expected only on worthy occasions,—for accomplishing what cannot be effected by the ordinary course of things, either attesting some system more important than the system of nature, or holding a conspicuous place in it.

4thly, The occasions on which they are said to have been wrought are sufficient to justify the interference of a Deity.

5thly, A dispensation or state of things affecting the moral constitution of the world, may be introduced and confirmed by miracles, which shall supersede their necessity for the future;—and it is reasonable to think that a Deity would have this object in view, to whatever length the preparatory scheme of extraordinary interferences might be protracted.

6thly, The very existence of such a dispensation will be confirmatory of the fact that miracles have been wrought, while it also accounts for their having ceased.

7thly, Miracles are capable of proof from testimony, by which alone, under such a dispensation, their past performance can be ascertained.

8thly, We have sufficient proof both in the actual existence of such a dispensation, and by testimony, that miracles have been wrought,—and those miracles, in particular, which are recorded in the Sacred Books, usually denominated the Bible.

9thly, Any single completely ascertained miracle, and much more a vast multitude and long series of miracles, must decisively prove the existence of a Supernatural Power or Deity.\*

\* It might have been pleasant to illustrate these propositions, but the materials, which any judicious reader will know how to arrange and apply, may be found in PALEY'S and BEATTIE'S *Evidences*, and other similar works. Dr. CAMPBELL'S *Dissertation* against Hume ought particularly to be read on the seventh. And the writer would recommend, on both the sixth and the eighth, WERENFELSII *Dissertationes* iv. et v., (in his *Opuscula*) entitled *De Veritate miraculorum S. Scripturæ*, and *Miracula signa veritatis*,—which he deems completely satisfactory, and a translation of which would be a valuable addition to our stores of vernacular theology.—“Some of the inquiring and philosophical part of mankind have been inclined to conclude, from the regularity and stability of the order of the material world, that it cannot be changed by any power whatsoever, nay that this whole of things is the eternal and self-existent being. Miracles are the shortest and most unanswerable confutation of this atheistical opinion. They are irresistible proofs that the visible world has a superior, who can alter and change its order or laws at his pleasure.”—Dr. LEECHMAN'S *Sermon on the Wisdom of God in the Gospel Revelation*.

## PROPHECY.

1st, Predictions exist relative to events of which some are now past, and others still future.

2dly, These, as contained in the foresaid Sacred Books, are discriminated from all other oracles as a Grand Unfolding Scheme, closely connected in all its parts, ever relating to objects of general utility, and portraying the progress of those revolutions of empire or of sentiment, which ultimately affect the whole world, tend to ameliorate its state for a season, and then to usher in the consummation of its destinies.

3dly, These Prophecies have been accurately fulfilled in the course of ages, and the fulfilment is still visibly going on.

4thly, It matters little whether the writers be known or not, or what manner of persons they were; the existence and the fulfilment of prophecy, and especially of such a scheme of prophecy, form, when taken in connexion, the best and the most irrefragable proof of the existence of an Omniscient Being, who exercises an Almighty control over all the actions of *free agents*, and the events dependant on these.\*

## THE BOOKS.

No miracles were ever wrought in attestation of any systems of religion but the Jewish and the Christian, which are recorded and their consistency manifested in the foresaid books.

They are the only books which contain prophecies worthy of a Deity, and verified by facts.

As the Miracles, which can be proved without previously supposing the sacred character of the Books, are sufficient to accredit the agents employed in introducing and conducting the above-mentioned systems of religion,—and as the Prophecies were confessedly prior to the date of the events,—the

\* HURD on *Prophecy* may be read with great advantage on the first part of proposition second,—that prophecy in Scripture is a grand unfolding scheme. To complete the idea, however, the remaining parts of the statement in that proposition must be taken into view. Much light is thrown upon them by the writings of FABER, and other late investigators of Prophecy. The idea expands and becomes more and more luminous in its own glory, as the investigation goes on.—See also Dr. HORSLEY'S admirable sermon on Prophecy, from 2 Pet. i. 20, 21. On proposition third, consult BENTLEY'S sermon on the Messiah, KIDDER'S *Demonstration*, Bishop NEWTON on the *Prophecies*, and MASON'S *Dissertations*.

claim of the writers to immediate intercourse with an Almighty and Omniscient Being is justified,—and, by consequence, such a Being, who is God, must exist.

Or thus :

1st, The Books must have had an author or authors.

2d, The authorship is disclaimed by the writers.

3d, Their disclaiming it is well-supported ;—by their character, unlearned, of ordinary talents, previously imbued with strong prejudices against the subjects of their doctrine or predictions ;—and by their circumstances, members of a segregated nation, and thereby deprived of the advantages of human science, excluded from that knowledge of the world which might have been the basis of political conjecture with regard to the fate of nations, and was evidently necessary to fit them for devising a religion calculated for universality, &c.

4th, The Books cannot have originated from human policy or priestcraft, the only other probable sources to which they might be traced ; for their object evidently stretches far beyond every thing proposed by mere civil policy ; this object they profess to accomplish by means very different from those of the world ; they everywhere testify against making religion an engine of state ; and they develop the process by which the Almighty, whom they claim for their author, will at length overwhelm all tyranny and priestcraft in ameliorating the state of the world.

5th, They cannot have proceeded from man. Of this they afford internal evidence in their very style and manner ; but especially in the extent of intelligence they display,—their uniform relation to the same great objects, though written at divers times and after sundry forms,—their absolute harmony, not only of tendency but of sentiment,—and their opposition to the known propensities of mankind.—On other grounds the Bible cannot reasonably be supposed an invention of man. The wisdom with which it is framed is not yet completely discovered by Christians themselves ; and it is a fact, that they are much assisted in their discoveries, by the very objections of their infidel opponents. Now to suppose that the Jews,—a people sequestered from the world, whose national character the scriptures themselves declare was obstinacy and rebellion, and whom the sceptic regards as on various accounts the most stupid of men ;—to suppose that they, or the primitive Christians, those simple adherents of the crucified Jesus, harassed with fightings without and fears within ;—to suppose, that these men, who were in certain respects opposed the one class to the



other, were capable, by their own powers, of framing a grand universal scheme of religion, constructed with such consummate wisdom, that all the objections of learned heathens and philosophical deists should only bring to light formerly unnoticed provisos against them,—should ever tend, by gradually unveiling the beauty and consistency of its parts, to increase its stability, and render its evidence irresistible ;—to suppose all this, which is the essence of modern infidelity, must indicate credulity and absurdity in the very extreme.

6th, Prior to our admission of the books, we know no intelligent beings superior to man, or intervening between him and a Deity ; to a Deity, therefore, the books ought to be ascribed :—but even supposing such beings to exist, still from the complexion of the books, their author must have been One, Omniscient, Wise, Holy, Good, and the same with the Author of Nature ; and if they must have had such an author, they prove the existence of a God.

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Besides Miracles and Prophecy, with proper illustrations of the moral perfections to be expected in a Deity, these books disclose a *peculiar system of government* by special supernatural interference among the Jews ; and they shew what hath now *succeeded* to this,—who now possesses the throne in relation to that government, and in what form the kingdom or REIGN OF HEAVEN is now revealed and expanded.

These disclosures indicate facts, which serve farther to establish the Being of a God, and at the same time throw much light on the general doctrine of Providence so necessarily connected with the existence of a Deity. And as the principles on which a Deity may proceed in the government of free agents, cannot be learned from nature or common observation, we are with great propriety allowed to appeal to the Sacred Books, and to take from them those views of his plan which may assist in solving difficulties, and which alone can give rest to the soul.

## PART SECOND.

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**"SOLUTION OF DIFFICULTIES AND ANSWERS TO OBJECTIONS,—FIRST, FROM CONSIDERATIONS INDEPENDANT OF REVELATION; AND, SECONDLY, FROM REVELATION IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES."**

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### PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

It ought to be granted, that if the proper proofs of an All-wise and Omnipotent Being be produced, difficulties and mysteries cannot set them aside.

Should the reasons of this postulate be demanded, the following may be given.—Negative arguments cannot subvert, nor be legitimately held to invalidate positive evidence. Again, mysteries, apparently or even really inexplicable, do not destroy our convictions in other cases. We proceed upon the conviction, notwithstanding the mystery, in the ordinary affairs of life, and may we not add in almost all our philosophical speculations?—In the present case, mysteries are far from being inadmissible, since a Deity, even supposing the thing possible, could be under no necessity of completely manifesting himself to his creatures, or rendering every part of his ways intelligible to them; the relation of the creatures to him may also have been so changed, as to superinduce a considerable degree of darkness on what was originally discovered or discoverable, so changed perhaps as to occasion a certain hebetude of the human intellect, and along with this a certain retiring

of the Deity.—But this is not all ; it is not to be expected, in any circumstances, that the works of a Deity, and especially his methods of procedure in the government of his creatures, should be altogether level to our comprehension any more than his nature and perfections. Human plans and procedure, as they originate from human intelligence, must be within the compass of its scrutiny ; their springs, their objects, and their adaptation to these, may all be explored, and so completely, that a sentence sufficiently accurate may be passed upon them. But the ways of a Deity must be distinguished by traces of inscrutable wisdom. Might not divine sovereignty too, envelope them in certain degrees of mystery, even beyond what must necessarily rest upon them, were it but to exercise the rational powers of man, or produce that subordination of spirit which is so suitable in creatures ? Might it not be expedient that this mystery should remain to produce or confirm the impression of a future state,—or shall we say, even to prevent the criminality of passing a rash sentence on the ways of heaven, by suspending the final decision of creatures who are liable to err, till the whole plan be completed ? The fact is, were there no difficulty, no mystery, this very circumstance would militate against the proof of a Deity ; and the atheist would be perspicacious enough to avail himself of it.—Farther, while there may be some sources of intelligence calculated to remove the difficulties which attach to the present state of things, yet supposing the difficulties not completely removed even by these, this circumstance, so far from invalidating the positive proofs of a Deity already advanced, will not disparage the utility of the very sources of supernatural information referred to, since enough may be disclosed by them for regulating our worship and enabling us to fulfil the ends of our being in relation to a Deity, and sufficient reasons may exist, perhaps even be discoverable, for concealing the rest.

But we shall be still farther advanced in the path to a desirable solution of difficulties, if we place clearly before our minds those occasions of doubt which are founded in mistake, or which can only be considered as arising from prejudice.

Among these occasions of doubt, we reckon,—1st, Limited and insulated views of facts or events. Who can ascertain all the relations of any particular incident ? Much less surely can we pretend to explore the relations which must subsist among all the ways of a God. Yet the very idea of relations is often lost sight of ; we rest in limited and personal views, we feel the perplexity ever attendant on these, and then exclaim against

the distorted images which owe their existence solely to our own contracted method of judging. It is thus too, we expect that even in the present state the evil works of men should always be punished in the very agents who sin ; or that, if there be a God, the various systems of iniquity which make their appearance, should forthwith be suppressed by him,—without considering the relation which these things may have to past or future events in some great scheme worthy of a God, how necessary they may be in the present constitution of the world, or how far they may enter into the methods ordained by an infinite wisdom for ultimately displaying the glory of Deity.—2dly, The supposition that the world must necessarily be in its *Original State*, or such as we might expect it to have been, when it proceeded from the hands of an all-wise and beneficent Creator. To this, which is evidently a mere prejudice, must be traced all doubts founded on the existence of evil, physical or moral, and the presently apparent state of disorder.—3dly, The supposition that this must necessarily be the *Ultimate State* of things. Hence doubts relative to the continuance of disorder, the delay of full retribution, &c.—4thly, The supposition that though it be not the ultimate state of things, yet it must necessarily be under the mere *ordinary Moral Government* of the Deity, and in such form alone as that in which this species of government might be conceived to adapt itself to a state of disorder.—On the last three heads reason declares that there can be no *necessity* for the thing supposed, and the Scriptures assure us that *the fact* is otherwise,—that the world is not in its original state,—that this is not the last constitution of things, we must “ look for a new heavens and earth,”—and that there is a peculiar administration superinduced on the ordinary or absolute government of Deity, and committed to the Messiah or Mediator, for the purpose of developing the reign of heaven, and bringing forward the last and best constitution. Reason, by recognising the positive proofs of a Deity, must admit that the actual state of things *accredits* the testimony of Scripture on all these points.

We only add, that since no difficulty or mystery can subvert our positive evidence in favour of the Being of a God, and since therefore on that ground we must still admit “ that He is ;” in order to be consistent, we ought also to be persuaded *a priori*, and thus so as not to be affected by our success in solving difficulties or explaining mysteries, “ that He is doing all things well,” or acting in a manner worthy of himself.

This is a conclusion in which both Reason and Scripture concur. By faith in the latter, without the testimony of sense, and even in opposition to appearances in the present disposal of things, we attain the assured conviction, "that God is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 6.

## SECT. I.

### CONSIDERATION OF OBJECTIONS FOUNDED ON THE IDEA OF ORIGINAL IMPERFECTION.

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INSTEAD of separate sections on the Rational and the Scriptural solution of difficulties, which would occasion much repetition, it is hoped the design may be answered as well, and even better, by giving both forms of solution under each head of difficulty; thus keeping the subject before the mind till the doubt be dissipated as far as may be practicable, and at the same time displaying the harmony between Revelation and sound though unassisted reason, with the vast superiority of the former to the latter.

At the outset it must be observed, that some difficulties proposed by the atheist are unreasonable, being solved by the principles on which all proof must be conducted, or because they are mere queries which no theist is obliged to answer otherwise than by saying, that the fact depended on the will of the Deity,—since, till it be shown either that a Deity ought not to possess a sovereign will, or that his will ought not to have acted in the case supposed, the answer must be deemed sufficient, and the difficulty which it meets can be no argument against the existence of an infinitely wise, good, and powerful being. Should we be asked, for example, why a gnat is not as large as an elephant? the difficulty stands with the atheist, not with us, who say that the difference of magnitude was the will of the Creator. Again, were we asked why any thing material exists, and why all is not spirit? the query would be as foolish as why any thing exists at all, or why there is a universe?

Of the same kind are some other bold demands frequently made, only their unreasonableness admits of being more fully exposed. Is it asked, or does the surmise occur, why did not God, if he existed from eternity a being infinitely powerful and good, for the more ample communication of his goodness and exercise of his power,—create the world from eternity? we answer, that to us and to right reason it is a contradiction to speak of any thing being created from eternity. Is it urged, but why was the world so lately made? the reply is equally obvious. Not to say that other parts of the universe may have existed prior to our planetary system, suppose creation to have taken place millions of ages ago, still the same query might be put, why then and not sooner? Since there must have been some period of commencement, and all periods of commencement that can be supposed to have an equal claim, the argument, if good, would prove that even a Deity must be for ever precluded from exerting his creative power, because he could never begin so early, but it might be said he could have begun sooner. Such are the suggestions of Reason. We may add, that the mind truly desirous of rest as to certain strange thoughts which are apt to occur with regard to the existence of a Deity prior to his works, may find considerable relief from the volume of Revelation, which discloses the doctrine of a Trinity. This doctrine presents the beatitude of three Persons contemplating in each other the common perfections of divinity, in uncreated, adequate, and, at the same time, peculiar manifestation, infinitely superior to all the faint traces of these perfections afterwards impressed on the works of nature, and in this enjoying the communion of reciprocal love,—not to speak of the contemplation of the plan of the universe, and of the universe itself as actually existing,—nor of certain special internal transactions establishing economical characters among them, to be afterwards displayed in the mystery of redemption. The Scriptures, indeed, represent the contemplation of each other by the divine persons, and of the common divinity in any work, as the only *worthy* form in which the existence of the work can be connected with the happiness of Deity. Hence, in language which affords but a gleam of light to our minds, they declare, that the Father made all things by the Son, and both through the Holy Spirit.—But should the atheist refuse to be initiated into this mystery, he must be reminded that even reason disclaims the disadvantage attached to the idea of solitude in conceiving a God who can be but one; and regards him as sufficiently happy in possessing and contemplating his

own perfections, independently of any manifestation of these in created existences. With this verdict the Scriptures concur, pronouncing him emphatically "The Blessed."

Is the query proposed, why is not the universe altogether boundless and immense, a fit habitation for the infinite Being who is supposed to have made it; or why is it not at least more ample and magnificent? The answer is the same as on the head of commencement, since the same objection might be made were the universe inconceivably greater than it is. And it remains with the atheist to prove that a Deity, if he create at all, must be under the necessity of creating all possible worlds; or that a created universe can be infinite. We hold the scriptural idea of God's "resting from his works," to be sufficiently consonant to reason.

Is it asked, why so few orders of being, and these of such mean workmanship, the principal with which we are acquainted being that frail impotent mortal creature denominated man? The scale of being, we reply, comes within our view only as it appears in a part of the universe, and therefore we know not how many orders there are. The heavenly bodies hold a place in the scale inferior even to animals and man, weak as he is. But if we may judge by our world, other opaque bodies in the heavens may be inhabited by beings which diversify even the order to which we belong, perhaps carry the scale still higher. At any rate, we are not so arrogant as to pretend that we are the chief of creation. Admitting the being of a God to whom we are accountable, and following the lights which, by admitting this truth, we are justified in following,—lights of which the atheist is not entitled to bereave us in proposing such a question, we believe that there is a future state of rewards, in which the righteous shall receive a superior mode of existence, and are also persuaded that there is an invisible world of spirits connected with the universe at large,—that God does not rule merely by mechanical causes and the involuntary properties of *matter*, but (as it is reasonable to suppose in regard to a system where both matter and spirit are found,) also by voluntary agents, certain *intelligences*, whom we denominate angels, and regard as superior to man. This is another and not absolutely inexplicable mystery, developed by Scripture. Besides, since the orders of being must have been limited, it is enough if such exist as constitute a harmonious system, properly adapted to its ends, or such as it pleased the Deity should exist. Agreeably to this dictate of reason, we are accustomed to say, in the language of Scripture,—and it is



surely a species of adoration which, on the supposition of a Deity, was to be expected,—“ Even so, Father, for so it hath seemed good in thy sight.” We know a mystery also upon this head, into which, as well as into the former, the atheist may perhaps refuse at first to be initiated, but which he would find admirably calculated both for enlightening and solacing his mind. It is, that beside all the ways in which the Deity is necessarily connected with matter or with created spirits, there is one of a peculiar kind, the highest in the scale of relation to his works,—one of which this part of the universe has been the honoured medium, and by which that alleged weak and worthless creature Man has been dignified;—this is, the incarnation not of deity, but of a divine person, who is yet mysteriously one with the other divine persons. This wonderful fact, though it took place upon special grounds,—such as might require it, or are at least sufficient to justify it, and though in its relation to these grounds it belongs to the plan of Redemption, may at the same time be found to answer a grand purpose in the economy of the universe. We take for granted here the proper divinity of Jesus Christ; for say that he was himself a created being, though the highest superangelical spirit, still an infinite chasm must have intervened between God and the works of creation. But view him as Immanuel, his incarnation chains the universe to the throne of Deity. One link was sufficient. And if ever such a connexion was to be established between God and all his works, as some one world must be selected to afford the occasion and the means, so a more worthy or glorious plan of effecting it, while special ends in which we are deeply concerned are accomplished, could not be devised than that which the Scriptures reveal.

Considering ourselves as better entitled to appeal to these mysteries than the atheist to urge his unreasonable difficulties, we have introduced them, not as essential to the solution of the difficulties, but chiefly for the purpose of removing the scruples which are apt to be entertained against Revelation on account of the apparently restricted reference of its doctrines and facts to the interests of *man*, as if we were indeed the chief of creation, or the only objects of divine regard, and of shewing that these doctrines and facts, howsoever strange they may be, instead of increasing our perplexity, may contribute greatly to our relief, on principles *more general* than that of their relation to us and the state of our world.\*

\* As pious Christians are apt to doubt or deny the doctrines of natural philosophy, because they conceive them to be inconsistent with the doctrine

There are objections, however, on the head of original imperfection, which have a greater shew of reason, and some that really deserve our attention.

I.—“ The circulation of planets round a centre is natural and pleasing both to the eye and the mind ; but if this give an idea of symmetry and beauty, there must be a great defect in the position of the fixed stars. Instead of forming a regular system of concentric orbs, each attended with its own planets, and all revolving about one common centre, they are scattered without order throughout the immensity of space, forming no one regular figure, and many of them so near as to render it highly improbable that they are, or can be, the centres of any planetary system.”

The force of this difficulty may be greatly removed by the following considerations suggested by reason.

Our ideas of beauty and symmetry are necessarily limited by the confessed imperfection of our minds. There are doubtless some general principles both of the beautiful and the sublime, yet it is well known that different persons and nations entertain very different opinions. Some, on the very subject before us, conceive the variety of constellations to be more pleasing than any regular or uniform disposition could have been. All agree, that the aspect of the starry heavens is sublime ; and sublimity

of Scripture concerning the method of salvation, so, by a prejudice *precisely similar*, philosophers are apt to reject the doctrine of Scripture, because they conceive it to be inconsistent with the grand and expansive views they have formed of the universe. What ! say the one class, are there other worlds, and other fallen beings, and must Christ's incarnation and death benefit them too ! And must we, say the philosophers, relinquish all our sublime speculations, for a system which seems to make man the whole of the universe, and would represent the Deity as solely attentive to him, or more attentive than he possibly could be to other worlds larger and more magnificent than this ?—But the common people might embrace the System of Natural Philosophy, without being in the least embarrassed in their views of the Mystery of Redemption, since there is no necessity for supposing that the inhabitants of other worlds have fallen, or if they have, that the benefit of Christ's mediation was intended for them ; and philosophers, if they would justify their name by candidly investigating the subject, might find it easy, not only to conciliate the grand theme of the Scriptures with their doctrine of the universe, but to perceive such general relations of that theme to all the other works of the Deity, as must farther expand and elevate their views. These relations will open before us as we proceed in the discussion.—[Since the Essay, with this note, was written, Dr. Chalmers has published his *Astronomical Sermons* on this very point,—an eloquent and powerful work, which might prove greatly satisfactory both to the philosopher and the pious believer.]

is of greater moment than regularity, particularly such as might be deemed artificial, in the works of a Deity.

But we labour under a farther disadvantage by our position in one of the planets which necessarily controls our view of the universe. Though all the planets move in nearly circular ellipses, yet to our eye this is not apparent. It is impossible, for example, that Venus should exhibit a revolution ; she can only appear to move in one direction through the heavens, remaining stationary for a time, and then assuming a retrograde course. Did we inhabit the sun at the centre, the point of view would be more advantageous ; and were we placed in the centre of the whole universe, all its constellations might present a more strikingly regular and beautiful appearance.

The proximity of the stars is only apparent, and their distances, even when gathered into groups, are so great, in fact, on any plausible calculation, as to admit of their being each the centre round which some planet or planets revolve. According to Herschell, the stars, in a certain part of the heavens, seem to recede, which, as it is contrary to the law of gravitation, he imputes to a gradual approach of the sun, and the whole of our system, to the constellation Hercules. Did we then reside in any of the stars of the most compact group, we might see the rest at immense distances.

This motion of our system may lead to the conclusion which Herschell has also suggested, that the sun is slowly revolving round some distant centre, and that the whole universe has some common centre, to a motion round which all its systems are properly adjusted.

But though this sublime idea be admitted, while it does not require us to imagine any dissolution of the groups or nebulae, and while it does not appear that any point of view whatever could rectify the universe into a regular system of concentric orbs,—it must still be remembered that we have no reason for supposing regular structure, according to our notions, to be the only end worthy of a Deity. Many purposes may be served by the present structure of the heavens which we cannot even conceive, but which if known would completely justify the arrangement. There may be other beings acquainted with these, and profited by them. It is possible that we may at length be initiated into the mystery, and thus our rational powers blessed with the views and consecrated to the adorations for which they were originally formed.—In the mean time, though the heavens assuredly were not replenished for the sake of man, yet as they

have various relations to this planet and its inhabitants, the object of all these relations is gained by their present form, perhaps even better than by regular structure. Their present form, besides all its utilities, in increasing the quantum of light in the heavens, favouring navigation on the earth, &c. tends, as we have seen in the demonstrative part of this treatise, more fully to ascertain the existence of an Intelligent First Cause, than a concentric arrangement of all the bodies in space, which might have been plausibly ascribed to chance, or the operation of physical causes.

On this head the Scriptures contain but little, not being designed to teach us astronomy, or to give general reasons for the works of God. They frequently recognise the limited powers of man. They consider us as fallen from our original capacity of understanding the works of God, and are mainly occupied in unfolding the plan of recovery to this capacity, and to all the pleasures in *reserve* for it. They represent it, however, as the ancient belief, that the constellations are beautiful, sublime, and useful. (Job ix. 8—11.) And they introduce the Deity himself, declaring the present structure of the heavens to be the result of his sovereign will, at the same time calculated to display his wisdom, power, and benevolence: “Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? Canst thou bring forth Mazzaroth in his season, or canst thou guide Arcturus with his sons? Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven, (their true form and designs,) or canst thou set the dominion thereof (either passively—their utility, or actively—the control over them,) in the earth? (by giving it the benefit, which it has, or, by assigning it the place of central control, which it has not.)” Job xxxvii. 31—33. “I have made the earth and created man upon it; I, even my hands have stretched out the heavens, and all their host have I commanded.” Is. xlv. 12.—“Seek him that maketh the seven stars, and Orion, that turneth the shadow of death into the morning.” Amos v. 8.

The Scriptures, moreover, hold out the hope of a future state, when the righteous shall see all things “in the light of the Lord,” shall “know” in their measure “even as they are known,” and be eternally occupied in contemplating and celebrating the manifestation of the Deity in his works. Nor is the view which they give of *Heaven* and *Hell* foreign to the idea of the universe suggested by Herschell. Though in the immensity of space there can neither be “up” nor “down,” in the strict sense of the terms, yet as in supposing two planets in

opposite quarters of the heavens, the eyes of the inhabitants of each would be said to be directed upwards to the sun in the centre, so if we suppose a common centre of the universe, the direction from all points, even of the utmost circumference, would, with greater propriety, be said to be upwards to that centre as the principal place, than downwards ; and lines drawn from this centre would descend in every direction to the exterior abyss of darkness and vacuity. Such a centre, it is evident, would be the fittest habitation of the Almighty, by whose habitation can be meant only the place where his glory is most eminently manifested. It accords with the Scriptural idea of the Throne of God, around which he hath spread out the canopy of the heavens as the curtains of his tent. It is "the high and lofty place" whence proceeds in every direction the manifestation of the Deity in his works ; whence issues that influence which philosophers style gravitation, but which is, according to Scripture, the divine power, upholding the universe, and retaining its several parts in their constituted order,—whence too angels are missioned on those behests in which the Deity may choose to employ means, but which are out of the sphere of physical laws. This centre must be to us, and indeed to all worlds, "the third heavens," beyond the aerial or atmospheric heaven of every inhabited globe, and beyond the starry heaven which encircles or revolves around it. If then the righteous of mankind shall, upon grounds justified by the wonderful mystery of their redemption, be translated to this high and lofty place, (which other good beings may also be allowed to visit,) they will be placed in the most advantageous situation for surveying all the works of God, according to the powers which may be conferred upon them, and we know not what regularity and propriety may thence be discerned in the arrangement of the universe. Hell, on the other hand, will be the region of exile for all rebellious beings, the vast inane beyond the limits of the universe, to which they shall be driven as to the farthest distance from the throne of God, from the blissful manifestation of the Deity in his works, and from even the comfort of natural light. Between it and heaven there is, according to Scripture, "a great and intransible gulf;" it is the region of "outer (exterior) darkness," the "bottomless abyss." So far as corporal punishment may be requisite, the electric fluid, which does not depend on the presence of air for its activities, and which is usually styled in Scripture "fire and brimstone" or "the fire of the Lord," may be the means employed. Let us for the

present follow the lights we have, recognising and revering the Deity, endeavouring to fulfil the present ends of our being; and let us hope for a more advantageous aspect, and clearer understanding, of the works of God. “If any man,” said our Saviour, “will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine,”—may we not add, he shall know of the universe?

II.—“If the arrangements in regard to our world, its distance from the sun, its annual number of rotations, the inclination of its axis, &c. be demonstrative of wisdom and goodness, the argument must conclude against Mercury, Jupiter, Saturn, and the Georgium Sidus, which have not the same advantages for light, heat, the revolution of seasons,” &c.

The reply to this is briefly, that the difficulty rests on the unphilosophical presumption, that the inhabitants of these planets must be like us, and their constitution of things the same with ours; whereas we ought rather to reason from analogy, that the planet and its inhabitants are properly adjusted to each other.

On this head the Scriptures have nothing specific. Everywhere declaring the admirable adaptation of the earth to its animated inhabitants, especially “the sons of men” to whom God “hath given it,” they merely throw out to reason the fact that the same God “made the stars also,” and assert of his works in general that “in wisdom he hath made them all, and because he is great in power not one faileth.” His “tender mercies are over all his works.”

III.—“The unequal and rugged form of the earth, with the vast mass of the ocean, presents an appearance of deformity, and a waste of space which might have been more happily occupied.”\*

Would the objector in this case have the surface of the earth as smooth as a factitious globe? It were easy to show how disadvantageous this form would have been in numerous respects. Besides, “pulchritude is relative, and all bodies are truly and physically beautiful under all possible shapes and proportions

\* Nequaquam nobis divinitus esse creatam  
Naturam rerum, tanta stat prædita culpa.  
Principio, quantum cœli tegit impetus ingens.  
Inde avidam partem, montes, silvæque ferarum,  
Possidere, tenent rupes, vastæque paludes,  
Et mare quod latè terrarum distinct oras.

*Lucret. lib. 5.*

that are good in their kinds and fit for their proper uses." An equal convexity of the globe would present to each individual only a narrow prospect (supposing nothing to interrupt it) of a little circular plane around him. Are there long ranges of barren mountains in some of the best climates and most fertile regions of the earth? The excellence of the climate is greatly owing to them; and by condensing the vapours to the production of rain, fountains, and rivers,—they give to the vallies and plains around their boasted fertility. Take away the mountains, reduce the earth to a mere convex rotundity, and what a loss in the vegetable kingdom, as all plants cannot grow in the same region; what a want too in the mineral, of those metals which contribute so much to the comfort and conveniences of life. Grant mountains to exist, and imagine them all regular cones; what then would become of all the romantic and sublime scenes of nature? The dull uniformity could not long be enjoyed. To expatiate on the benefits of the ocean, the mass of whose waters is no more than is requisite to preserve the earth and vegetable nature as it is, and which increases the wonder of such a self-balanced globe, must be needless.

By the testimony of Scripture, the ocean is a vast theatre of almighty power and goodness, "there ships go, there God makes to play the great leviathan;" and a dull flat of even cultivated land could never have compensated for "the chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the everlasting hills."—(Deut. xxxiii. 15.) It is the sentence of Scripture as well as of mankind, that "a land of hills and vallies" is more pleasant, beautiful, and useful, than a uniform plain, for such a land God gave to Israel, and pronounced to be "the joy of all lands." Read the civ. Psalm in Buchanan's very elegant paraphrase (which might be appended as a complete answer to the quotation from Lucretius in the note), or in the still more sublime simplicity of the original, and the structure of the earth,—more useful and pleasant than the atheist would have had it,—so far from disparaging, must be allowed to evince in the most captivating form the wisdom and goodness of the agent. If there be disadvantages, the Scriptures connect these with the state of disorder to be afterwards considered, and at the same time benignantly turn them to the best account, teaching us to regard the world as only the land of our peregrination, and directing our views to "a better country, that is an heavenly."

IV.—"The earth is encumbered with weeds and noxious



plants, dangerous animals abound, and all the elements are filled with incalculable legions of insects,—the beings of the lowest capacity far exceeding those who are susceptible of the higher kinds of happiness, while the former also, by their numbers and powers of annoyance, prove greatly vexatious, nay often destructive, to the latter.”

If all this be supposed to belong to the original constitution of the world, it will become the atheist to inquire, by proper means, into the destiny of this part of the universe, and to consider whether a Deity might not have some design to accomplish, in a particular department of his works, to which such a state of things was either essential, or at least greatly subservient. Our views as theists on this subject will be afterwards explained, chiefly from Scripture, and the atheist may then judge whether such a design could be worthy of a Deity; for if it be, the state of things which it necessarily infers can be no argument against his existence.

Reserving therefore to the next division of our subject the existence of noxious plants, animals, and insects, with the manner in which they may be *judicially* employed by a Deity, we only remark at present, that even in this state of disorder, and things being as they are, there is a sort of optimism in the supposed objectionable subjects, inasmuch as they are really beneficial, and in various respects necessary, to the comfort of mankind. “It has been demanded, why should *beasts of prey* exist? They are exceedingly useful. Were it not for these the earth would be covered with the dead bodies of animals. Every year one-twentieth at least of quadrupeds perishes; a tenth part of birds and an infinite number of insects, most of the species of which live only a single year, some but a single day. As the rains carry down these spoils to the rivers, and the rivers convey them to the shores of the sea, it is there chiefly that nature has assembled the animals who devour them. Most ferocious beasts descend from the mountains by night, and direct their researches toward the shores. There are even many classes which seem to be expressly created for those places; such are amphibious creatures, white bears, otters, crocodiles, &c. It is particularly in hot countries, where corruption is most rapid and most dangerous, that nature has multiplied carnivorous animals. Then it is to be remarked, that beasts of prey shun the haunts of man; that there are few who come out in the day-time; and that they have all striking characters which announce their approach. Some have strong odours, others piercing cries which are heard in



the night at a great distance, others streaks of harsh colours which are perceptible also from afar on the yellow ground of their skin. After all, what imports their ferocity to us? Has not nature given us dogs? have we not arms that they cannot resist?—Serpents, centipeds, scorpions, toads, inhabit scarcely any other than humid and unhealthy places, from which they keep us at a distance, or which they admonish us to render salubrious.”\* *Noxious plants* enter much into the *Materia Medica* rendered so necessary for man under the present constitution of things. And as for *insects*, if their power be sometimes irresistible, their utility is not less conspicuous. “Man has been able in some instances to make them subservient to his will. The bee collects honey for his use; the moth, under his influence, affords him silk; the cantharis, an active drug; the cochineal insect, the most brilliant of his dyes. Even where they are totally beyond his control, they minister indirectly to his wants. Under the form of eggs, grubs, caterpillars, maggots, aureliæ, and flies, they furnish food to innumerable creatures who augment his comforts in a thousand ways. But it is as the scavengers of this part of the universe that these puny beings become chiefly salutary to man and all other animated nature. Without their unceasing aid in this respect, the air would become quickly tainted with the most noxious effluviæ, which would soon put an end to animal existence.”†

\* See at large the interesting speculations of ST. PIERRE on this subject. *Studies of Nature. Stud. vi.*—Dr. PALEY, *Nat. Theol.* ch. vii. discusses the question on broader grounds. He observes, 1. That beasts must die in one of three ways,—by acute disease, to which animals are not much subject,—or by violence,—or by decay. In decay what misery does the animal feel, and how is that misery prolonged, without assistance as in human sickness and infirmity. It is much better that they be devoured, than that the world should be filled with drooping, superannuated, half-starved, helpless and unhelped animals. 2. The existence of beasts of prey gives room for a special system of activity on both sides, in pursuit and defence. The pleasure of animals lies greatly in activity, and the fear of danger does not much affect them but for the time. A hare, though constantly exposed, is as playful an animal as any other. 3. Destruction is to be taken in connexion with superfecundity, which is of great use and even necessary, yet would, if left without a counteracting system, overburden nature and prove dangerous.—These remarks have considerable weight in solving the difficulty, though they do not account for the present state of diminished felicities; nor indeed are they so satisfactory as other parts of the work, in which the very able author has exerted all his circumspection to preclude the possibility of rejoinder.

† ANDERSON'S *Recreations.* No. 1. Introduction to Natural History. He takes up the subject again, No. 11. page 356 of that department of the work.

V. “The structure of the human body doth not look like the workmanship of a Deity. We have only five senses, and these not so perfect as in some animals; we are liable to distempers, to deformity, and to death. What a want of goodness and wisdom, which should have been able to prevent this imperfection! We resemble some ordinary piece of clock-work, which has but few motions of use, these continually out of order, and soon at an end.”

On this objection the same remark must be made with which we commenced on the former. We ought next to recall to mind the view already given of the wisdom and goodness apparent in the human structure. The alleged *defect* with regard to the senses will not then detain us long. Although the power of a Deity be infinite, the case is otherwise with the subject in or by which that power is displayed. Senses are relative to their objects, and these are necessarily limited. Though we had more senses than we have, (and what the additional ones should be we cannot conceive, much less their use,) there would still be room for the same complaint. As the Creator must stop somewhere, his wisdom is sufficiently displayed if the senses he bestows be adapted in number and variety to our state; and his goodness, if we feel no want. Those which we have received possess the proper degree of perfection. Though the eye could descry objects hundreds of miles distant on the surface of the earth, this vast power would be useless, since the view would be interrupted by other intervening objects, and necessarily terminated sooner by the convexity of the globe. If the eye again were like a microscope, it would be a curse to man rather than a blessing,—we would not see above an inch at once,—it would take a long time to survey any object,—we would be a terror to ourselves. For particular purposes, the senses are capable of being improved or assisted; and their present state gives place to invention. To an atheist *diseases* and *death* cannot but be terrible, as his happiness must be chiefly if not solely in sensual pleasures, which are marred by the former, and terminated by the latter. Most distempers, however, are of our own making, and in truth the effects of abused luxury and plenty—the very results of divine munificence. Means exist for alleviating the evil, even when we bring it on ourselves. May not distempers also have moral purposes? Or to accommodate our language to the notions of the atheist, may they not be beneficial in teaching us to avoid habits physically destructive, and the indulgence of propensities inimical to the existence of the human race?

Prolong the present life even for ages, it will still be too short for the atheist, who restricts to it the whole duration of his intellectual and sensitive being. But its brevity is evidently adjusted to the present state of population; and taken in connexion with our natural capacities of improvement, the hope inseparable from these, and the inextinguishable desire, “the longing after immortality” engendered by both; much more in connexion with our moral state, and the dictates of conscience on the heads of reward and retribution;—it may indicate a future existence, in relation to which the short duration of their present exposed and often afflicted condition, will be a blessing to the truly virtuous part of mankind.\*

As the perfection which still exists in the structure of the human frame is sufficient to prove the wisdom and goodness of a Deity, it may lead us to presume that diseases and liability to death have been somehow superinduced on our original constitution. The fact can only be ascertained by history. And the Holy Scriptures pourtray the primitive condition of man, account for the entrance of death and all our woes, proclaim the reality of a future state, and at the same time delineate a plan of divine government, according to which mortality and all human distempers, while they hold a conspicuous place in the judicial procedure of the Almighty, are wondrously counterbalanced, and even sanctified to the most desirable purposes, in the happy experience of all who serve him,—converted, as one has not inelegantly said, into *blessings in disguise*. “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin. As by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. They who sleep in Jesus are not perished. The body is sown in corruption, it shall be raised in glory. There is first a natural, and next a spiritual body. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God. Neither life nor death shall separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. O death, where is thy sting! O grave, where is thy victory!” Rom. v. viii. 1 Cor. xv. 1 Thess. iv.

## VI. Before passing to the next division of our subject, we

\* The author is satisfied that there are good reasons for rejecting Dr. PALEY's mode of solving the difficulty with regard to death, and he believes it can be well attested that Dr. PALEY himself relinquished the system of religious opinions with which that solution is connected. Consult rather Bentley's *Confutation of Atheism*, pp. 95–98.

may mention one difficulty more, which though not precisely of the same complexion with those we have been considering, is yet related to them, as it is founded on the necessary imperfection or finitude of matter and spirit. We will suppose then, that in thinking on the awfully grand subject of Deity, it may occur to the mind, that this is a subject which somehow implicates,—thus, “a Deity must be an all-sufficient Being, omnipotent, all-wise, infinitely good; yet such a Being will be destitute of the power of giving any adequate display of himself,—he can neither devise nor command the means. There can be no image of him in his works,—no true representation of him as he is.”

This difficulty ought not to occasion the smallest hesitation, even upon natural principles, although we had no other aid for removing it, since in regard to the universe physically considered, it amounts only to this, that a Deity cannot perform contradictions, which certainly was not to be expected. He must be infinite, and therefore every thing exterior to himself must on this very ground be finite, for it is impossible for one infinite being to produce another, or for two to coexist.

Let us see, however, what can be said. If the difficulty refer to the *extent* of manifestation, matter it will be allowed is very limited, and can be the medium of displaying only a few of the perfections which should belong to a Deity. But spirit will admit of a more ample discovery. From it may be reflected some faint image, not only of his natural perfections—spirituality, intelligence, free agency, and immortality, but of his moral attributes also—justice, holiness, goodness, &c. Take the difficulty, however, in its true bearing, which is not on extent, but rather on *adequacy* of manifestation; what if there be facts which may show that even this has not been found impossible with God? What if a plan of operations exist, in which all the divine perfections shine forth in harmonious and full manifestation? For the knowledge of a plan so confessedly above nature, not capable of being developed in works of creation, we must resort to some other means of discovery. The plan, supposing it to exist, could never be known, from its very complexion, but by revelation. To this, therefore, and to the wonderful constitution of things which it hath disclosed, we must turn our attention. And the atheist would do well to consider, whether the very disclosure of such a plan hath not shown, that it is at least *possible* for a Deity without any contradiction to glorify himself to the utmost in his works; whether, being possible, it were not *worthy* of him to do so;

and whether the books which unfold such a plan, do not thereby *accredit* themselves as a revelation from God.

Grant, then, that a suitable occasion may exist, or be predetermined and permitted for the sake of the plan. This will be that state of things which we are to consider in the next section as preparatory to it, controlled and otherwise greatly affected by it. We commence with saying, that in any original constitution of matter and spirit, there can be no scope for displaying some of the most deeply interesting and captivating attributes of a Deity,—mercy, compassion, and grace in its proper acceptation. But if a fallen state which might give place for the manifestation of such attributes should exist, and God were to deal with the unhappy and unworthy subjects in their own persons according to the essential rectitude of his nature, they must perish, and the attributes could never be displayed. Instead of this, the Scriptures declare, that “God hath set forth Christ a propitiation for sins, that he might be just, and at the same time the justifier of the ungodly,—that he loved us, and spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us all,—that this Son who was made flesh for the sufferings of death, is the eternal Word who was with God, and was God,—that it hath pleased the Father that all fulness (both as to the grounds and sources of happiness) should dwell in him,—and that in him men shall be blessed even with an eternal weight of glory.”—In this work of Redemption, how admirably do all divine perfections *harmonize*! A brighter theme never occupied the mind of created beings than this: “Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have embraced each other. Truth springs from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.” Even in that work over which the morning stars sang together, there was no such display of a Deity,—of what he is or can be. The gospel brings before us the divine excellences in *full manifestation*, while it proclaims the name of Jehovah as the “Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, pardoning iniquity, yet not clearing the guilty.” It reveals at the same time the divine Persons as sustaining certain peculiar characters in the execution of the most amazing of all their purposes; and thus ascertains their *distinct subsistence* in the one Godhead, which could not be displayed by the works of Nature or Providence. Then it presents such a demonstration of the perfections common to these divine persons, as must appear to the intellect of every created being to be *adequate*, or at least far more complete and illustrious than any other conceivable state of things could admit of.

What the holiness of a Deity is, in his absolute hatred of sin and love of righteousness, could not have been displayed to the utmost by any infliction of punishment on merely finite beings. What the all-sufficiency of a Deity can bestow, could not be adequately discovered by all the beneficence of nature; there was still behind the possibility of blessing fallen creatures with all spiritual blessings, and crowning them with glory in heaven. What the Love of a Deity could do, failed also to attain its full manifestation in all his respect for innocent beings, while it could purpose and effect the restoration of the guilty, by not sparing the Only begotten, but giving him up to all the penalty they had incurred. In the plan to which we refer as revealed in the gospel, infinite love and eternal justice have each its perfect work. Mercy too is aggrandized beyond all that can be shewn by a system of forbearance, in delivering from the utmost misery and elevating to the highest honours and felicity which it is possible for a Deity to confer; Wisdom demonstrates its infinitude in devising all this; Power in carrying it into effect. Here then it may be said is the very image of God,—something which, though we cannot fully comprehend it, may be styled an adequate manifestation of the Deity,—that which after all his works in Nature was still wanting, a true representation of him as he is. Hence accordingly the Scriptures constantly speak of this plan, as in its form, execution, and effects, the proper medium of **SEEING** God here and hereafter. And the Revelation which discovers it, is styled “the glorious gospel of Christ, who **is THE IMAGE OF GOD**,”—the image of God, not only in his divine person, nor simply because as mediator he is officially God’s ambassador or representative to us, but also because the whole of this plan in which the divine persons and the divine perfections may be said to have their fullest manifestation, centres in his mediatorial character and work.

What then! are *we* so distinguished? Is *our globe*, and no other, the scene of this manifestation of the Deity?—Why not? Some world must have been selected; and considering the dreadful nature and dismal effects of the state of things requisite to furnish the proper occasion for such a manifestation, it was better that but one world should be the scene, than that many should be affected by moral evil. The demonstration of what a Deity can do,—the uttermost display of his attributes, in one world is sufficient. May not this, if necessary, be easily notified to other rational beings throughout the rest of the universe? Revelation expressly states, that by the mystery

of human Redemption, “ the manifold wisdom of God is made known ” to beings who are not directly concerned in it, “ to principalities and powers in heavenly places.” Speaking of the sufferings and glory of Christ, it informs us, that these are things into which “ the angels desire to look.” By these spirits, or by peculiar communications from the Deity, this high form of *the knowledge of God* may be imparted to other worlds ; or the inhabitants of these worlds may be permitted occasionally to visit the third heavens, where the Redeemer resides, and there to behold and converse with the redeemed. If angels by this plan of recovery know what they cannot know from experience, how odious sin is ; if they learn to set a higher value on their own happiness, by perceiving at what an expense happiness when lost must be retrieved ; if their views of the divine persons and perfections be expanded, and thus their blessedness increased, and their adorations elevated ; why may not similar or the same advantages be afforded to the inhabitants of other planetary systems,—with whose mediums of knowing and serving the Deity, we again, in our turn, may be afterwards acquainted ? “ The Lord Jehovah shall rejoice in all his works.”

On this subject imagination may take her sublimest flight, without ceasing to be befriended by reason, or passing beyond the vast sphere of that light which bursts from the volume of divine Revelation.



## SECT. II.

### CONSIDERATION OF DIFFICULTIES ARISING FROM THE PRESENT STATE OF DISORDER.

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A SPECIES of evil exists which we denominate *moral*, because of its relation to the nature and government of a Deity. There is also much *physical* evil in the world. The existence of the former will account for that of the latter, and solve many objections drawn from it against the power, wisdom, and goodness of God. Yet both, and in general, the *complex state of things* arising from their existence, may become occasions of doubt, and furnish the most specious objections.

In the system of the atheist, what we denominate Morality can be nothing else but a calculation of pleasures. It can have no common standard; for the calculation must not only be regulated by the opinion which each individual forms about pleasure or happiness, but it will be constantly varied even with the same individual by circumstances. Although the general interests of society which reduplicate upon the pleasures of a generous mind, should be taken into the account, still there can be no common standard, since every man must calculate for himself. Nevertheless, the most sceptical on the being of a God can admit, that some kind of derangement exists different from physical imperfection, inconveniency, and pain. And since this kind of derangement, on the supposition of a Deity, must constitute *moral evil*, he may frame his objection against us upon this ground. He may say,—and even those who are persuaded of the being of a God, the rather too that they are so, may be perplexed with the difficulty,—“ If



there be an infinitely holy and good Being, the governor of all, how came that which is so contrary to his nature and will to exist? and how can his suffering its existence to continue, be reconcilable with either his own moral excellence or his benevolence to his creatures? It could not enter into the world without his being the author of it,—and this would be a contradiction. It could not continue without implying that he is either not able or not willing to suppress it, which equally involve a contradiction.”

With regard to *physical evil*, the allegations naturally follow; “1. Its existence and measure are incompatible with the presidency of a Being infinitely good: 2. If intended to be penal, it does not always exhibit this character,—does not attach to the proper objects, is not proportioned to the cause, nor adequate to the end.”

Thence the objections founded on the *complex state of things*, —“the unequal allotments of time, the unequal distribution of punishments and rewards; the prosperity of the wicked and the sufferings of the good; the inadequate punishment of sin; the inefficiency of what are styled judgments or general calamities; and the apparent respect of persons, deduced from the visible state of affairs, the history of nations, and the doctrines of revelation.”

Many of these objections seem to run into one another, especially under the last head. So far as there is any shade of difference, we shall avail ourselves of it, for the purpose of bringing forward in detail such considerations as may distinctly apply to each, or serve to present the whole subject more fully to the mind. We have not forgotten, however, neither ought the sceptic, now when he may exult as most on his own ground, to forget, the preliminary remarks with which we commenced our attempt at the solution of difficulties. As it is not to be expected, it cannot be reasonably required, that any created being should be able “to search all things, yea, and the deep things of a God.” Let us proceed, duly apprised of the weakness of our powers. There are depths which might drown the highest created intelligence. And most appropriate is the admonition of the poet,—

“Fools rush in, where angels fear to tread.”

#### I.—THE ORIGIN AND EXISTENCE OF MORAL EVIL.

It is probable that the polytheism of the heathen was intended to account for this, or was partly founded on the im-

possibility which they felt of otherwise explaining it. What a pitiable and unsatisfactory resource of unassisted reason ! With it must be rejected the apparently more philosophical, but evidently congenial notion of two first principles opposed the one to the other, the Arimanius and Oromasdes of the east, the figurative “ light ” and “ darkness ” testified against in the Holy Scriptures ;—and as derived from this, the Manichæan doctrine of the inherent evil of matter,—with all the reveries of the gnostics, whether prior or posterior to the dogma which afterwards held such a conspicuous place in the system of Manes.

Later attempts have equally failed. The origin of moral evil cannot be traced to the mal-conformation of the body ; for supposing a God whose work must be perfect, no such conformation was to be expected without the previous existence of that very species of evil, as the ground of punitive actings. The same remark will hold with regard to any supposed original defect of rectitude, or adaptation to virtue, in the intellectual and active powers. Far less can the influence of example, whatever place it may have in perpetuating moral evil, account for its origin. Bad example necessarily implies the existence of the evil prior to imitation ; and as it could not exist with the Deity, it must be supposed to exhibit itself in some created being.

But neither is the scheme which deduces its origin and permanent existence from physical evil, more satisfactory. It were easy, one would think, to detect here an egregious *hysteron proteron* ; for how, it might be asked, could physical evil exist under the government of an infinitely just and good Being, except as the punishment of sin in some form or another ? In this case the priority of moral evil must still be supposed. To anticipate the objection, however, physical evil has been ingeniously confounded with the necessary imperfection of created beings, and thus the explanation proceeds : “ The universe is a system whose very essence consists in subordination,—a scale of beings descending by insensible degrees from infinite perfection to absolute nothing ; we may expect perfection in the whole, yet it would be the highest absurdity to hope for it in all the parts, because the beauty and happiness of the whole depend on the just inferiority of the parts, that is the comparative imperfection of the several beings of which it is composed ; this imperfection again, cannot possibly exist without some inconveniency and suffering, and must be regarded as itself a comparative physical evil ; and since the true reason of

the fitness of things with the obligations naturally resulting from it, and therefore sanctioned by the Deity, can only be this,—that some actions natively produce happiness and others misery, all moral good and evil are nothing more than the result of physical;—and thus it appears that the production of good exclusive of evil in either sense, is one of the probable impossibilities, which even infinite power, without performing contradictions, cannot accomplish.”\*

This scheme of optimism, may be admitted so far as it respects the different orders of being and their comparative physical imperfection, with the very obvious exception, however, that no scale of beings can be conceived “descending from infinitude to absolute nothing.” The highest in any created scale will still be at an infinite distance from infinite perfection, and the lowest as far removed from absolute nothing; nay, in the range of possibilities, the scale itself will present vast chasms or vacuities which might have given farther scope to infinite power. But passing this, no scheme can be agreeable either to reason or Scripture which shall assert the optimism of moral evil in relation to the Deity, except in regard to final result, that is, providing for a more illustrious demonstration of his perfections than had otherwise been practicable. The scheme detailed evidently leans for support on the calculation of pleasures, or of sources and means of happiness, as the sole standard of morality. On this it not only suspends the fitness of things, but builds also (as on its proper foundation) the interposition of divine authority. It is a scheme that verges in fact to the Manichæan system; for though it admits a Supreme Being, it ranks among the impossibilities of a Deity the production either of matter or spirit *exclusive* of physical evil, and by inseparably connecting moral evil with this, it makes the latter as well as the former absolutely necessary on the supposition of creation. The idea of imperfection among the several orders of beings is merely relative, and can only refer to the absence of some good for which the creature is not adapted, or which, though abstractly possible, it could not possess and be what it is. But granting we should deviate from accuracy, and endeavour to qualify the thought by styling this imperfection privative evil, it will by no means follow that the evil of inconveniency and suffering is necessarily attached to it, and the latter only comes under the idea of phy-

\* BOLINGBROKE, POPE, and other advocates of an Optimism independent of Divine ordinations.

sical evil. A horse feels no pain from its not being a human creature, nor even a child from its not being a man; the circumstances may expose to inconvenience and suffering, but then the pain is superadded, it is wholly adventitious, not in strict propriety the necessary result of the place held by the creature in the scale of being. Far less is it either intuitively evident or demonstrable that physical evil must necessarily be the parent of that which is moral. No appeal to the present state of things will account for the origin of the latter. We are not one whit advanced to an explanation of the difficulty by being told that "injuries produce anger, often to excess, and that danger excites fear," for this is to give a reason for all evil by shewing that one evil produces another. Whence came the disposition to injure one another? and if fear be an evil, why is there danger?

It is much to be regretted that Dr. PALEY's four propositions on the Origin of Evil, in his *Natural Theology*, are nearly as exceptionable as those which have just been considered. They leave a chasm in the relation between moral and natural evil, and the latter they represent as unavoidable. He states, "1st, That important advantages accrue to the universe from the establishment of general laws. 2d, That general laws, however well set and constituted, often thwart and cross one another. 3d, From these thwartings frequent particular inconveniences will arise. 4th, That it agrees with our observations to suppose that some degree of these inconveniences takes place in the world of nature." These propositions may account for the phenomena of the present constitution of things; but the question will still recur, could not the Deity have otherwise settled the laws and adjusted their objects? If he could, then we must resort to his will, and rest either in provisional arrangements for some plan peculiarly calculated to manifest his glory, or in the enactment of punitive disorder, which implies the existence of moral evil.

What reason suggests for explaining the origin of moral evil, and reconciling its existence with the grand truth that God cannot be the author of sin, may for the sake of perspicuity be arranged under the following induction of principles.

1. A creature when upheld by a Deity must be upheld in what is *essential* to its nature; for otherwise it is not upheld but destroyed in regard to its former physical state.

2. A rational creature, to be capable of moral obligation and thus responsible to the Deity, must not only be rational, but

*a free agent.* It must therefore be physically upheld as such, or live and move as a free agent by the power of the Deity.

3. All the actions of such a creature are, when abstractly considered, **INDIFFERENT**; that is, they may be either good or bad according to circumstances. Speaking, for example, is *per se* indifferent, the quality depending on what is spoken; and all words are indifferent, the quality of the speech arising entirely from the manner in which they are put together. Bowing and kneeling are indifferent; if to the true God morally right, if to an idol morally wrong. Taking, will assume the character of stealing only when the person has no right to what he takes. The same may be said of killing; its moral complexion is determined by the subjects—whether animals or men, and by the necessity of the case, in lawful war or self-defence, or the execution of criminals; when neither right nor necessity exists, it will be homicide if accidental, murder if intentional. So on of all other actions.

It will be granted that this remark can be of no practical use to the creature, since from his very condition as a creature he must be under law to the Deity, and all actions as performed by him must bear a relation to that law which will extend even to motives. With the creature therefore no action can be *absolutely* indifferent; it must either be lawful or unlawful, although if *lawful* it may be indifferent so far as not to be matter of positive *duty*, binding at all times, or in particular circumstances, either by the letter or spirit of any law. The abstract consideration of actions, however, may be of some use in our present discussion, for,

4. The divine **EFFICIENCY** has place only in physically producing the actions of creatures, and therefore can respect their actions only in that sense in which they are indifferent. The sole concern of the Deity as to efficiency in the actions of free agents, which the necessary dependance of the creature implies, is that which has been described by the terms *præcursor* and *concursum*,—the former signifying excitement to action, the latter simultaneous operation, not co-operation as a distinct agent, but simple operation in the activity put forth by the creature. Now this concern of the Deity is in both respects merely physical, upholding the free agent as such; sustaining that very liberty which is essential to his nature, its relation to motives, the susceptibility of impulse, the vital motions, the muscular action, &c. Although therefore, in the second cause or creature, the moral quality be inseparable

from the action performed, yet in regard to the first cause it is clearly separable. And when we consider that the moral quality arises from the relation of the creature to God and a law, it must appear not only separable, but actually detached from the divine efficiency, nowise imputable to God, who is not under the law, and who never can, by any connexion with his creatures, be brought into the circumstances on which the moral quality, whether good or bad, depends. This may be illustrated by facts which the atheist can suppose, and the Christian knows to be true. So far as efficiency was concerned, God could not be said to work Adam's righteousness while he acted properly in his state of primitive integrity and abstained from the forbidden fruit, for then no merit could have attached to the conduct of the first of men, not even by paction; and, on the other hand, when the robbers of the wilderness fell upon the substance of Job and took it away, though God upheld them in the action, the immorality of it could not be imputed to him. As he was not under the law he had prescribed to Adam, so neither was he under that which regulates the property of creatures in their relations to one another; and the action of *taking*, which the efficiency respected only in a physical view, was in that view indifferent,—susceptible accordingly of different moral aspects,—wrong in the creatures who interfered with what was not their own, right in God, who thereby only took from the patriarch goods which he had bestowed for a season, but his own property in which had never been alienated.

5. If all actions considered as the subjects of divine efficiency be merely physical, and thus indifferent, so that the very good, which is *positive*, cannot be said to be wrought by God in such sense as would exempt the creature from responsibility, or be inconsistent with that liberty in which as a responsible creature he is upheld in the very time of acting,—then it must be evident that the *malitia* or immorality of actions, which lies in mere *defect*, can much less be said to be wrought by the Deity. Language is usually composed of terms, which, when their origin or composition can be traced, will be found to be types of the natural or common-sense conception of things, and therefore frequently just. With the Christian such terms particularly will have weight as have received the sanction of inspiration. Now the terms descriptive of sin in one of the most copious and happily expressive languages,—the language of a people distinguished by much philosophical speculation, are *ἀναγρία*, and *ἀνομία*, both privatives significant of defect,—the former supposed to mean aberration from a mark,—the latter

certainly denoting disconformity to a law. These are the terms employed in the New Testament, and whether the first (which has an aspirate) be a privative or not, which some have doubted, this is the definition expressly given of sin, 1 John iii. 4, ἡ ἀμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία,—“sin is want of conformity to the law.” If there be an aberration from the right scope, (or positive rebellion, as others render ἀμαρτία from a Hebrew derivation) it consists in this, which is the true criterion and characteristic of the action, that there is ἀνομία, disconformity to a law. But this definition of sin is justified by reason. Examine a moral quality which way we please, if it be bad, we will find that this is just owing to its disconformity to a rule or standard, or rather consists in that disconformity, and is exactly proportioned to its degree.—Now a mere want is not an effect which requires the positive efficiency of a cause. It cannot be said to be wrought in the subject. Physical defect may indeed argue corresponding defect, or at least cessation of physical power; but moral defect cannot be traced even to this, much less in any sense can it be ascribed to physical efficiency. The action of taking in theft may be as perfect, and the person as completely upheld in all his physical activities and essential liberty (which is nothing but the physical power of choosing or refusing as motives sway him) as in any other case.\*

6. As the efficiency of Deity, which is physical, does not produce the *malitia* or immorality of actions, so there is no rule of fair judging by which that efficiency may be even *consequently* charged with the immorality.—This is intended to meet the very natural surmise, that though the idea of defect, in which the immorality consists, originates from the circum-

\* The author knows no metaphysical or theological writer who has denied the definition of sin as a defect, but the celebrated VITRINGA, in a dissertation *De Natura Peccati. Obs. Sac.* vol. ii. That dissertation certainly does not display his wonted acumen. He thinks that the definition can apply only to what are styled sins of *omission*, but that in sins of *commission* the act and its relative quality must be taken together as constituting sin in the concrete. This is plausible, because it is unquestionably true of the creature, and accordingly seems to be referred to in a well-known definition of sin, “It is any want of conformity to, or transgression of, the law of God,”—the first clause noting sins of omission, and the second sins of commission. But though this distinction of actions may serve well enough, according to Vitringa’s intention, to expose the absurd phraseology, and in their consequences perhaps dangerous opinions, of some who represent sin as a *Nihil*, a *non existens*, a *nihil privativum*, &c.,—it interferes not with our reasoning, since, were it not for the relation of the creature to a law, the act, even in sins of commission, would be indifferent, as it is in regard to the physical efficiency of Deity, and the quality which destroys its indifference, being defect of agreement with the law, can only attach to the creature.



stances of the creature, yet the immorality ought to be traced ultimately to that physical efficiency, without which, it is plain, the action chargeable with defect could not have existed.

The rule upon this head is the common maxim of lawyers and metaphysicians, *causa causae est etiam causa causati*. But this rule both reason and common sense, (as these gentlemen know,) require to be limited in various ways, which entirely remove its application to Deity in the matter of sin, and even serve farther to elucidate the subject. The first cause can be charged with the effect produced by the second only in the three cases following ; First, When the effect necessarily arises from the second cause as constituted or used by the first. Thus God makes the sun a luminous body,—the sun, as a luminous body, by physical necessity which is unavoidable, makes the day,—therefore God makes the day. Again, a man casts fire among combustible materials,—the fire necessarily burns them,—therefore, the man is the incendiary, chargeable with the crime, if the action be criminal. But if any thing subversive of this physical necessity *intervene*, or if it *do not exist*, the rule will not apply. Parents beget children ; their children perform many worthy actions ; therefore the parents performed these actions. Here there is no consequence, because the free-agency of the children intervenes, which, though it be physical, as a property of the human constitution susceptible of moral qualities in its place, yet from its very nature destroys that necessary connexion between physical cause and effect on which the application of the rule depends. Thus there is no consequence in the argument, God upholds man,—man performs bad actions,—therefore God performs these actions ;—for here also the liberty and peculiar circumstances of the subject intervene, God upholding him in that free-agency and relation to a law which are essential to his character as a creature, but which, as we have already shown, necessarily separate the quality of the actions from the first cause.—Secondly, And in regard to instruments, the rule will apply only when the first cause and the second or instrumental, are homogeneous, that is, of the same kind. Thus the Word of God sanctifies instrumentally, but it is the Spirit of God who employs the instrument,—therefore it is the Spirit of God who sanctifies. The argument is good, for both causes, in the due subordination of the former to the latter, are of the same kind,—positive, and adapted to the production of moral effects. But it would be obviously absurd to say, a sword killed an innocent man,—his neighbour used that sword,—the sword is not culpable, therefore neither



the person who used it ; for here the causes are dissimilar, sword merely physical, the person who used it morally amenable to law. God's efficiency in the sinful actions of men is physical and not necessarily related to law, it cannot therefore be charged with the criminality of the moral and accountable subject. In a case of temptation, both the devil and the human subject concerned in the same action, the one as the impulsive or efficient cause, the other as the instrument, both are criminal ; for the efficiency of the devil is not physical, but moral—by swaying, instigation, or otherwise, and thus of the same kind with the activity of the instrument, and both, as free agents related to the law of the Deity, are responsible. The case is very different with regard to God's efficiency in upholding both, or making use of devils and wicked men to accomplish his purposes, which is entirely physical. And although peculiar moral phenomena may be the principle of punitive justice (to be afterwards considered) belong to the divine government of fallen creatures, no other efficiency than that which we have so often stated, could have place in the origin of evil. Thirdly, the rule cannot decisively apply to mixed or merely metaphorical instruments, so as to involve the first cause. By these we mean subjects which have some property or peculiarity of their own, which comes into view in the action along with the proper effect of the primary cause. Such peculiarity, it is evident, cannot be ascribed to that cause. A man rides a lame horse, the lameness appears in the riding, but it cannot be ascribed to the man either as its subject or cause. The only thing of which he is the cause, is the motion to which that lameness happens to be attached. Thus, too, the action of the sun on a stagnant marsh will develop the putridity of its waters, but this putridity cannot be imputed to the sun, whose action in other circumstances has no such effect. As in these similes, so in the matter under discussion, the defect which attaches to the results of divine efficiency, though not produced by it, will be unavoidable if the creature be previously depraved, but if not, it will still be his own concern, as arising from his free-agency and relation to a law.

7. Since divine efficiency is only concerned in the physical production of actions, which can by no rule transfer the immorality either wholly or partially to the Deity ; and since there is no medium between efficiency and permission, nor any other way of accounting for the existence of a thing under the control of a Deity, it remains that the immorality of creature-actions must be traced solely to PERMISSION.—By asserting efficiency

the production of all actions, we avoid one of the two extremes on this subject, that which ascribes an idle permission to the Deity in the case of evil actions, and represents him as mere spectator, like the man who launches a boat and leaves it to drive whithersoever wind or tide may impel it. By reflecting efficiency to the *physical* production of actions, and referring the immoral quality solely to permission, we escape the other and still more dangerous extreme of making God directly the author of sin.

But when we have got thus far, and found that the proper sense of the divine *concursus*, whether previous or simultaneous, with regard to the immorality of actions, is simple permission, it will still remain to consider, whether or not this idea does not make God *indirectly* the author of sin.

That there may be a moral quality in Permission, when it is in the power of the party who permits to prevent the action, cannot be denied, and the question is in fact narrowed to this point, "Since the Deity, though not under law like the creature, must ever act agreeably to his own nature or essential holiness, can the permitting of an action to have a bad quality, or the permitting a bad quality to attach to an action in which, physically considered, he is the efficient cause, be consistent with his holiness?"—On this point, Reason will lead us into two different though nearly allied trains of thought, varied only by the circumstances of the creature, who must be regarded as previously innocent, when the inquiry bears on the Origin of moral evil, and as already depraved when its Permanent Existence is investigated.

The Permission, let it be observed, is not approbatory in respect to the immorality of the deeds, whatever approbation it may involve of the results in their detail and consummation, or of some vast plan by which the Deity may choose to glorify himself through the medium of the existence of evil. An allowance may doubtless be given by the Supreme Legislator for occasional departures from positive laws, which are founded solely on his will—not on his nature. This, however, is not an allowance of sin, for the same authority which gave being to the law, sanctions the exception, which therefore ceases to be sin. But to suppose such a permanent license to sin in the violation of either positive or moral laws, as the permission of which we speak would amount to if it were ethical or approbatory, would be to suppose—what must indeed be contrary to the divine nature, and all that the Deity owes to himself—the annihilation of law, the total destruction of moral obligation.

This, therefore, admitting a God to exist, is *a priori* impossible; and there are no facts to disprove the being of a God, by shewing that the permission of which we treat is of the kind supposed. On the contrary, conscience reclaims against immorality; revelation condemns every form and species of sin; misery is connected with its existence; and the displeasure of the Supreme ruler is often testified by judgments or calamities plainly retributive.

To some it may appear, that the difficulty is only increased by this, that the Deity at once disapproves and permits. Much, however, is gained by recollecting that sin in itself is really disapproved, and that the disapprobation and permission, not being of the same kind, nor to be understood in the same sense, may be sufficiently compatible. With regard to the latter, we then inquire how far it was possible to prevent the evil; under what obligations the Deity was to prevent it, or whether under any; and upon what principle his not preventing it might be justified.

1. So far as we can conceive, the existence of moral evil could be prevented only in one of three ways,—1st, by destroying the free-agency of the rational creature,—or 2dly, by confirming the free agent in his primitive integrity,—or 3dly, by some constant influence, ordinary or extraordinary, controlling his liability to err, in all cases of moral danger.

2. It does not appear to reason, that a Deity could be obligated to resort to any of these methods.—In regard to the *first*, obligation has no place, and if any thing come in its stead, it must be the idea of a fatal necessity, for ever precluding the Deity from upholding free agents in their liberty, and thus in fact from forming such agents at all,—lest they should sin. If the Deity cannot consistently permit sin, and if the only way of prevention be the destruction of free-agency, then, the proposition, The Deity cannot permit sin, will be convertible with this, he cannot make free agents,—which is absurd.—The idea of obligation can only respect what the Deity owes either to the creature or to himself. Let us apply this to the *second* and *third* methods.

It will be granted that the creature might be *confirmed* or completely prevented from falling by some special influx, without having his free-agency destroyed, for fallibility is not necessarily connected with free-agency, as God is infallible, yet perfectly free. Now, though a Deity cannot, strictly speaking, be said to owe any thing to his creatures, not even by paction, (the obligation, in such a case, resolving itself into the regard

which his own nature requires he should pay to his word,) yet for the sake of investigating the subject in every light, let us preserve the distinction. We ask, how can he *owe it to the creature* that it should be confirmed? Does his giving it existence, or constituting it a free agent, bind him to this? Surely not. We can conceive that it might even be a disadvantage, for if the creature were capable of attaining a higher state of happiness by a course of probation,—then confirmation, which must have been original, if necessary for preventing the possibility of sin, would entirely preclude the hope of advancement. Obligation by paction is out of the question, since confirmation, if originally bestowed, must prevent the existence of a state of probation, and thus entail the boon, (if a higher destiny be supposed, for reward it cannot be called,) without being deserved. Take now the other view,—how could the Deity *owe it to himself* that the creature should be confirmed? Is it not essential to the idea of a Deity, that all created beings depend upon him for the existence and perpetuity of moral as well as physical excellence, since these are something positive, and not like sin—a defect? Does not this imply a natural fallibility in the creature? And how does the divine nature forbid this fallibility to exist, or even to discover itself by actual deviation from the line of rectitude,—that is, how can it be contrary to the divine nature to withhold confirmation for a time? If a creature may be formed both holy and physically perfect, though necessarily fallible, then as long as it cannot be proved that this fallibility and the demonstration of its truth by the proper evidence, are contrary to the divine nature, or may not tend to the more full manifestation of the glory of the Deity—by ascertaining to creatures their absolute dependence upon him, not to speak of higher designs,—so long it cannot be deemed unworthy of God to permit sin.

This brings into view the *influence*, ordinary or special, also consistent with the free-agency of the creature, the constancy of which was suggested as the third way of preventing moral evil. It is that influence, howsoever explained, that the dependence of the creature on the Deity for all excellence properly respects. Let it be suspended or withdrawn, the fallibility of the dependant being will be immediately evinced by the commission of sin. But as this influence conferred no new or additional faculty on the rational creature while it continued, its withdrawment despoils him of none; it imposes no force on his will; it bereaves him not of his liberty. It just leaves him to himself, not physically but morally; and if its negation withhold motives for

standing, it presents none for falling, though the creature must feel the force of such motives as may be otherwise present or occur to his mind in these circumstances. Besides, it is evident that all our suggestions on the subject of confirmation apply to that of influence; for if the influence must be permanent, what is it but virtual if not actual confirmation?—We have to remark in concluding this article, that supposing the Deity bound to prevent sin either by confirmation or constant influence, the disregard of obligation imputed to the Creator, and the sin committed by the creature, would still be *different* or distinct the one from the other. The Deity would be supposed to have acted contrary to his nature in not precluding the possibility of sin, but this would not transfer the sin of the creature to him, while the circumstances of the creature, which generate the idea of sin in its actions, are so different from his. On this last point our former reasonings remain in all their force; and since we have now seen that it is not contrary to the nature of the Deity to permit sin, the fact of his doing so must be regarded as depending on his will. We inquire, therefore,

3. Whether some object may not be conceived which shall place the Permission of sin in exact accordance with all the other actings of the Deity? The question is simply this, could it be for his glory? Could it tend in any remarkable and otherwise unattainable form, to display his excellences? Motives, whether arising from the end in view or other quarters, enter deeply into the moral character of those parts of human procedure which may be lawful in themselves. Reason suggests that the same rule will hold even with regard to the Deity. Influenced indeed he cannot be by any motive properly extrinsic; but surely nothing dependant on his sovereign will could either be done or permitted by him which might prevent, frustrate, or in the smallest degree infringe upon the end he must ever propose, and the highest end we can possibly conceive, the glorification of himself. If the permission of sin be hostile to this, then it would still, after all we have said, be unworthy of God; if not, if the reverse to an astonishing degree be the case, then we have all the relief on this difficult subject we can probably expect. Nor let it be thought that this is to make the end justify the means; for—not to mention that this principle, however improper with creatures who must necessarily be subject to a higher authority with regard to both ends and means, cannot apply in every respect to the Supreme Authority himself,—the means in the case before us do not

require to be justified, since we have found that the permission of sin is not repugnant to the divine nature.

Now what if it should be deemed proper by the Creator of a universe to show that the happiness of all the beings he has made is not his highest end; that even this must be regarded as in due subordination to his own glory? And what if, to make this evident, and evince at the same time that the former is not essential to the latter, he should allow them to come into competition, not merely in the case of inferior creatures subjected to numerous physical evils, but (in order to this) in some departments of rational beings?—*some* departments, we say, for it could not be needful that general defection should take place; and if moral evil be confined to one world and a certain class of spirits, (which is all we know from the best source of information), the instances of ruined happiness, though numerous in themselves, may be but few compared with the incalculable myriads of animated beings throughout the vast extent of the universe. Without the existence of sin, how should it ever have appeared that defectibility is essential to every created being? And, supposing the demonstration of this by facts not absolutely requisite, yet since the permission of moral evil was not, as we have seen, inconsistent with the divine nature, why might not God choose that the demonstration should take place among some classes of rational creatures? As the principle, that He alone is naturally and necessarily infallible, must be allowed by every reflecting mind to be of vast importance in the whole sphere of morals, why might he not be pleased to establish it in the most impressive and incontrovertible manner, by allowing the fallibility even of pure spirits, as well as of spirits connected with matter, to discover itself?—Let us take into view, further, that sin or moral evil, being the very contrast of the divine rectitude, serves at once to render more conspicuous the brightness of its glory, and to give scope for the exercise of all the perfections it comprehends or implies. Not to dwell on the consideration that holiness, justice, goodness and truth are relative terms, it is certain that the contrast renders the idea of these perfections more definite, their existence more certain, and their manifestation much more illustrious, than if the foil had been wanting. What has reason to object against its permission?—reason which admits the utility of contrasts, and the resort of the Deity to these, in all the departments of nature.—And, finally, will reason protest against a plan, as unworthy of the Deity, which shall have for its object to effect a complete triumph



over evil in all its diversity of forms, by a corresponding variety of means,—bringing forth in its progress and consummation such views of wisdom, power, and goodness, and all other divine attributes, as could not possibly have belonged to any merely creative demonstration,—nay, involving what may be styled an adequate display of the Deity, connected with such an augmentation of the honours and happiness of rational beings as must be otherwise wholly inconceivable ;—a plan, on these very grounds, calculated and probably destined to be in various ways beneficial to the universe at large? Such a plan we have already alluded to ; and as unfolded in Scripture and developed by facts, it presents what may be styled the most wonderful demonstration of the Ability of a God,—showing how easily, in every sense of the terms, he can BRING GOOD OUT OF EVIL.

On the Permanent Existence of moral evil a very few observations may suffice. Supposing the creature depraved, the permission of the bad quality which attaches to its actions could not be avoided, without changing its constitution as a free agent, or controlling that constitution by recourse to co-action and miracle, or establishing some system of moral regeneration, which, while it left the physical constitution untouched, might either instantaneously or gradually remove the depravity. He who reflects for a moment, however, will perceive that there could be no necessity for preventing the immorality which must attach to the actions of fallen creatures, by *changing their constitution* as free agents, more than for preventing the origin of evil, which would plainly have been best upon such a hypothesis. The permission of its entrance must be accused of folly, if there was an absolute necessity for instantly putting an end to it by destroying the creature, or, which is nearly the same thing, changing its constitution as a rational and accountable being. God could have no such great and worthy plan in view as that which has just been suggested. —To have resorted to *co-action*, or *miraculous influence*, in all those instances which were likely to be stained with immorality, would have destroyed the liberty of the subject in these instances, and with it his responsibility. Then the compulsory force, howsoever exerted, must have been continual, since a bad quality, in one form or another, will attach to all the actions of free agents as long as their depravity remains,—it being essential to their free-agency that they act according to their moral state. Unless we suppose the Deity capable of performing contradictions, he must in point of efficiency phy-

sically excite and produce action, precisely according to the nature of the subject, whether an inert body, or an animal of instinct, or a rational and free agent like man. But man is a free agent only in acting according to his moral constitution for the time being; since whatever would influence him otherwise, said constitution remaining unchanged, must come under the idea of co-action. Would not the scheme of compulsory influence, therefore, while the moral state of the agent is unaltered, require to be perpetual, a constant miraculous affection, and thus resolve into something equivalent to the total destruction of the creature's free-agency already considered?—It follows, that the only remedy for the evil must be some *change of the moral state* of the creature, which it is certainly in the power of the Deity to effect by the proper means, without infringing on the physical liberty of the subject, nay in the way of sustaining it and operating upon it in a manner agreeable to its nature. The influence and all its means will be supernatural, but neither the one nor the other miraculous.

Such a remedy might belong to the plan of triumph over moral evil already referred to, and form one of its most illustrious departments. But then both the remedy and the plan which involves it, in the first place, imply the permanent existence of moral evil in the world, as the subject to be remedied; 2dly, Indicate the propriety of allowing it to develope itself, without regenerating every individual in infancy or at the moment of conception, since such an early change would prevent many forms of the triumph calculated to display its perfection, and preclude all evidence of the adaptation of the remedy to our rational powers,—all evidence indeed of its very existence; 3dly, Leave room even for an extensive prevalence of moral evil,—for the remedy being but one department of the plan, and moreover gracious, that is, provided in sovereign mercy, there may be a selection of its subjects, which will leave others under the full power of depravity; nor is it unlikely that persons of this last description should be needful in carrying forward certain details of the plan connected even with the remedial department; 4thly, Require a delay of the consummation of the change, which, implying present imperfection, will give place to the existence of much evil even with those who are liberated from the power of depravity. We must add to these considerations, that even where the remedial scheme may exist in its appropriate means, those must perish at all events who make such resistance to it as would render co-action, or a miraculous influence, necessary to convert them; for neither



of these belong to that scheme, nor could they possibly do so, since whatever they may accomplish in the physical world, they are in no respect adapted to the purpose of moral regeneration.

Our discussion on the permanent existence of sin terminates now in the question, “Why is the depravity of human nature itself permitted?—Is sin so unavoidably infectious, that when once it has entered, the infection must pervade the whole mass of human beings in their successive generations? Whence that Moral State which, till it be changed, must so necessarily vitiate all the actions of rational beings, that God himself cannot produce the action and prevent the bad quality or defect from attaching to it?” The true explanation lies, we conceive, in the principle, that sin or a depraved state may, and in certain circumstances must, be the punishment of sin. The process is JUDICIAL; and the Supreme Judge ought to be contemplated not simply as permitting, but ordaining, that this depravity continue till satisfaction be made, both for the first transgression, and for those also which have proceeded from the very depravity entailed by it on the offender. By virtue of some peculiar constitution, also, the first transgression may be such that it shall be a ground of judicial procedure against succeeding generations, and thus entail the depravity upon them as a part of the punishment. The case is deplorable. It is apparently hopeless, for the punishment, while it involves a depraved moral state, a domination of sin,—must for ever unfit those who are subjected to it from making the requisite atonement themselves; and yet the ground of *judicial procedure* must be removed before the *moral regeneration* can take place.

Reason will admit, what, as far as we can judge from observation, is also attested by fact, that as sin is the degradation of a moral being, and besides unfits him for happiness, and is inseparably connected with misery of one kind or another, the Supreme Judge may punish a transgressor by surrendering him to his wicked principles, and allowing him to proceed from evil to worse. But though this may establish the principle, and illustrate its application to co-existent beings, who are themselves the actual offenders, the manner in which it ought to be applied for the purpose of explaining the moral degradation of the human race, who could have no actual concern in the first transgression, can only be learned from the Holy Scriptures. It is a question of fact with regard to the circumstances of the first of mankind, and must accordingly be decided by testimony.

To proceed, therefore, we have next to consider the conformity of these dictates of reason as to the Origin and Existence of moral evil to the record of facts and doctrines in the Sacred Oracles.

Little is disclosed with regard to the real origin of sin. It appears to have taken place among the highest order of beings with which we are acquainted. It was not unworthy of the Deity to allow the dependence of all other orders upon him to be evinced by the defection of a large proportion of this order. He had only to withhold confirmation, and leave them to their natural fallibility, which we have seen is not inconsistent with his glory or perfections. If any number of these free agents should, in such circumstances, cease to recognise their dependence on the Deity, they would in that very act deviate from their sphere of due subordination. In this, accordingly, the origin of moral evil seems to be placed by Scripture. *Pride* is styled "the condemnation of the devil," the cause of his ruin. 1 Tim. iii. 6. Whether he grudged that he was neither confirmed nor originally infallible, or presumed that he was so; whether he aspired at a higher station than that in which he had been placed,—a wish which, if it related to a greater capacity for intellectual communion with the Deity in order to a larger measure of happiness, might seem to be congenial enough to a good spirit, yet would clearly imply discontentment; or whether he quarrelled with any of the works of creation, say the structure of the heavens, or the slow process observed in forming the earth, as unworthy of the majesty of Deity;—these are points wholly undetermined. Neither are we told whether the other spirits, who became his associates, openly joined him in rebellion, almost simultaneously coinciding with his views, or only pitied his fate when they perceived the ire of Jehovah directed against him, and thus censured the first discovery of vindictory justice. Any of these grounds was sufficient to involve them in the same condemnation. The overthrow of paganism in the Roman empire is evidently described in figurative language, borrowed from the first fall of the angels, Rev. xii. This may render it probable, that there is an allusion to the same event in Isaiah xiv. 12, where the downfall of the monarch of Babylon is foretold; and then the conclusion will be, that Satan and his associates had somehow attempted to interfere with the prerogatives of Deity. "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend unto heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God." Thus in its very origin, the

*fundamental characteristic* of moral evil was developed. It lies in the creature's forgetting its dependence, moving from its sphere, and one way or another disowning its subordination to the Deity.

On these spirits judgment was immediately executed. They were "cast down" to the great abyss, to remain there "in chains of darkness," under the dominant power of their own depravity, as the true degradation of intellectual beings, depriving them of all genuine happiness, and inseparably connected with such positive misery as they are capable of feeling. These chains, we have seen, can never be burst asunder by the beings on whom they have once been wreathed. And as the devils were guilty of warring directly against God as God, their sin has been deemed unpardonable, such as excludes them even from the benefit of having any subsidiary mode of making satisfaction allowed them. Jude 6.

As an evidence, however, that God had some special plan in view by permitting their fall, they were not so completely exiled to the great abyss, as to have no access to any of the systems in the universe. Our world has become the scene of their operations. God, for the purpose of carrying his great plan into effect, has allowed them to visit it, and to prove the instruments of seducing the first parents of the human race. Nor was it inconsistent with the state to which he had righteously reduced these fallen spirits, to do so, since none of their operations, from first to last, whether as the authors of sin or the executioners of punishment, would either require them to be released from the chains imposed upon them, or to enable them to burst them asunder. Still depraved, and still miserable in their depravity, they would be responsible for the moral evil of their own actions, and in just proportion also for that of the actions produced by their instigation. Thus were they "reserved" by the very chains they wore, "to the judgment of the great day," to the last retributions in the grand denouement of the ways of God.

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The history of the Fall of Man exhibits an arrangement of circumstances, the best calculated to evince that God is not the author of sin, either in its first introduction, or in its permanent existence.

I. Ponder the Mode of Introduction.—Our first parents

were made as perfect as creatures of their order could be without confirmation. And they were not confirmed, because God was pleased to place them in a state of probation for a higher form of felicity, of which Paradise was designed to be an emblem; and the tree of life a sacramental sign. To enlarge the sphere of their virtue, a special prohibition was issued. Being lords of the world, they could not intermeddle with the property of another, or covet that which was their neighbour's. But the special prohibition, excepting the Tree of Knowledge from the grant of universal dominion, at once reminded them of their absolute dependence on God for the lordship they possessed, and was admirably calculated to give scope for displaying that aversion from covetousness, which is so eminent a part of moral rectitude, that it is marked in Scripture as the criterion of respect for the whole law.\* Except as to this principle, indeed, it does not appear that the obedience of the first pair, considering the circumstances in which they were created, could have been put to the test. Some of the moral precepts as they are now addressed to us, were clearly inapplicable to them. But the spirit of all duty both to God and to man, was embodied in compliance with the precept, "Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat." And this precept being positive, that is, founded solely on the will of God, indicated from the beginning that the Divine Authority, abstract from all other considerations, must be regarded by man as a sufficient ground of obedience.

By one of the creatures, whose powers were probably unknown to our common mother, and by a question at any rate sufficient to occupy her mind and prevent her from adverting to the circumstance of its speaking,—a question directly on the subject, which at the time engrossed her meditations, Satan excited the desire which he deemed most likely to find place in a soul originally pure, without its criminality being instantly detected,—the desire of being speedily elevated to greater happiness, by a nearer resemblance to God. But the very idea of anticipating the happiness promised, without fulfilling the term of probation, nay, by violating the very conditions on which that happiness was suspended, not to say the wish of stepping into something superior to all that the goodness of God had conferred, or ever intended, moved her from her sphere of subordination to the Deity; concupiscence produced formal violation of the prohibitory law; and from what prin-

\* Rom. vii. 7. James i. 14, 15. 1 John ii. 16.

ciple we know not, whether pity or love, our first father, instead of resisting the temptation and looking for another helpmate, partook in her crime.

What had the Deity to do in all this? Not to present, but to permit the temptation;—not to operate the evil quality of Satan's suggestions, but to uphold him physically in thinking and communicating his thought as a free agent, though now so morally depraved, that the evil attaching to his thought and design could not be prevented without co-action or a miracle. Neither was it necessary to predispose our first parents to compliance by any deteriorating influence on their minds; it was enough simply to leave them to their natural fallibility. They had received the requisite capacity for standing, but it was such as might belong to free agents; and that the creature so constituted, though fallible, is not necessarily liable to fall, but may stand if he chooses, had been previously ascertained in the case of the angels, an innumerable company of whom retained their integrity when Satan and his associates fell. God, as we have seen, and as had also been shewn in the case of the angels, is in no respect obligated by his nature to confirm the rational creature, either by imparting to it such a moral constitution as should perpetually determine it, when acting most freely according to its nature, to abhor that which is evil and cleave to that which is good, or by exerting upon it such a supernatural influence as should constantly preserve it from falling. And if this is not required by his nature, much less by any promise or prospect held out to a probationary state, the confirmation or influence referred to being clearly an eminent part of the reward to be obtained by fulfilling the terms of probation, and the bestowal of the one or other only in this way obligatory by virtue of paction. The special law too, being positive, was not so related to the actings of the Deity as those laws which are derived from his nature and essentially moral, but which, nevertheless, do not affect his physical concern in the actions of men. Or, to examine the subject more closely,—that law being designed for a particular purpose, without reference to which it would never have been a law, and thus arising solely from the divine will, could infer no obligation on the Deity from the essential attributes of his nature, to see that it should not be violated in any action of the creature. On the contrary, if it was agreeable to the divine nature to give such a law for the specific purpose of probation, it was equally agreeable to that nature to do nothing which might frustrate its answering that purpose,

otherwise it must be deemed impossible with God ever to put his creature in a state of probation, which is manifestly absurd. The history of the Fall is perhaps the best mirror for an advantageous view of the concern of the Deity by natural efficiency without moral imputation in the personal actions even of sinful men. But not to dwell upon this,—

II. The Transmission of the moral state which necessarily contaminates all the actions of fallen beings, next claims our attention.—On this head the Scriptures decisively ascertain two things: 1st, That all human beings are naturally, that is prior to the true effect of the gospel upon them, under the *dominant* power of sin. The phrases “in sin,” and “under sin,” are frequently used as descriptive of the unconverted. Sin is said to have a “dominion” from which the converted are freed. These are represented as “not sinning,” which, as it cannot refer to absolute perfection, must be understood of release from some previous domination, which rendered sinning their proper characteristic. Our Lord, in his very birth, when an infant, or by his participation of our nature, was “made in the likeness of sinful flesh,”—only the likeness pertained to him in infirmities and exposure to sufferings, but the characteristic of the nature to which he was thus allied is “sinful flesh.” Rom. vi. vii. viii. 3. Eph. ii. 1, &c.—2dly, That this depraved moral state arises from our *connexion with Adam* in the first sin. That sin is emphatically styled “the transgression.” By it, in which alone we are said to be concerned, “sin entered and death by sin;” which death, as facts attest, “hath passed upon all,” even those who could not be responsible for actual sin,—“for that all have sinned.” More expressly, “By one man’s disobedience many were made sinners,” and “the judgment is by one to the condemnation” of all. See Rom. v. 14—19.

Now, though a bad physical condition of body may be propagated, yet to affirm that a *bad moral state* of the rational creature can be so transmitted, seems to be plainly absurd. God is the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and as the soul is immediately created by him, did nothing forbid, he could certainly prevent its wanting that original righteousness in which the soul of Adam was created. As easily could he, did nothing forbid, so correct the constitution of the body, as to fit it for being the habitation of a pure spirit. The possibility of both, he has evinced in the incarnation of our

Saviour. And, did not the very thing which required a miraculous conception in his case, forbid, we should naturally expect that the same benignant display of power, as to soul and body, would be exemplified in all cases even of ordinary generation. Still more absurd does it appear to say, that *the first sin*, the violation of the positive law, can be propagated; yet we are assured that it is by this single offence all are made sinners. If propagation were the sole or simple explanation of the moral phenomenon, why should not the other sins committed by Adam, prior to the conception of Seth at least, equally affect his posterity? Why should not the accumulated influence of all his previous depravity have terminated on Seth, and this, with the influence of the additional depravity contracted by Seth, passed to his immediate posterity, and so on, the fathers affecting their children with a progressive deterioration of human nature throughout all generations? Such reveries have no sanction from Scripture. According to it, we are concerned only in the first transgression. And the true idea seems to be, that the guilt of that offence is somehow a ground of *judicial procedure* against the whole human race, as the natural descendants of the first man. Hence the comparisons instituted between Adam and our Saviour,—the one “the first,” the other “the second man;” the former “the figure of him who was to come.” As the righteousness of our Saviour is the ground of judicial procedure, in releasing from the state of moral degradation and all other punishment; so the disobedience of Adam is the ground of a similar process, in previously adjudging mankind to that state of degradation with all its concomitant miseries. Rom. v. 1 Cor. xv.

If we inquire farther, the best explanation of this judicial procedure is a *federal transaction* between God and Adam, corresponding to the well-attested transaction with our Saviour. While the divine right so to transact is indisputable, the propriety of such a transaction, as analogous to other demonstrations of wisdom and benignity in the sovereign arrangements of the Most High, may be evident to the slightest reflection. By constituting the natural father of the human race their federal head, it presented the shortest way to the confirmation of the whole. For this, too, it was obviously the most advantageous plan. Adam, besides being equally related to all mankind as their common father, was formed in a state of maturity; and it was surely better that the happiness of a race of beings who were to come into existence in successive generations, and



pass through the stages of infancy and youth to manhood, should be suspended on his single probation, than on the precarious actings of the individuals themselves, whose condition in the early stages of life, so far as we can judge, must have increased their liability to fall. Angels were formed at once, and in the full development of their intellectual and active powers, yet they did not all retain their primitive integrity; much less likely was it that human beings would have done so. A plan, therefore, which might have secured confirmation during the period of immaturity and changes, or till the time of translation to heaven had arrived, was evidently preferable for human beings, to the method of transacting with angels. Then how much confusion was the plan of universal representation by the first man calculated to prevent! Had a number of the human race fallen, and by their own deed incurred the sentence of moral degradation, there would have been two classes of beings in the world entirely dissimilar,—the one absolutely sinless, the other absolutely sinful; but these could never have co-existed as the inhabitants of the same globe, nor can we conceive a constitution of things, either in divine dispensation or the common state of the natural world, equally adapted to both. The example of the fallen being constantly before the innocent, to whom they might be nearly related, must have been calculated greatly to distress, if it did not seduce them; and we cannot conceive how the malignity of the one class should have been prevented from annoying or persecuting the other—subjecting them to sufferings incompatible with a state of innocence,—without constant, extraordinary, or even miraculous, interference on the part of the Deity. May we not add, that such a federal transaction seems to be the only method by which the moral responsibility of human beings, from the very moment of conception, and onwards till they are capable of acting rationally, could be evinced? The most undeniable proof of their relation to the law of their Creator, from the very commencement of life, would be furnished by his judicial procedure, either in confirmation, or in condemnation.—But not to expatiate farther on the propriety of the federal transaction, as one department of the all-wise plan of the Deity relative to this world, the fact of its existence is sufficiently ascertained by the history of the fall, and by the doctrinal comments of Scripture on the consequent state of mankind. If all the posterity of Adam were concerned in the *grant* of dominion over the world, were they not equally concerned in the *restrictive clause* with which that grant was accompanied,—“Of the



tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat ; for in the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die ?” Death entered, and death hath passed upon all, “for all have sinned.” Guilt alone must be meant in this declaration, for guilt only is the basis of punishment. The guilt which entails the death originally denounced, cannot be actual or personal, for it is that of the first sin,—“the one offence” upon which “the judgment” is grounded. And besides natural dissolution, the death entailed comprehends moral corruption with all its consequences,—or what the Scriptures denominate “death in trespasses and sins.”

This, then, is the conclusion,—propagation by natural descent from Adam *defines* the objects concerned in the federal transaction, and thus the objects whom the guilt of its violation must affect ; but their moral degradation is *judicial*, it is primarily the consequence of that guilt, though it may afterwards be increased by their own personal violations of the law. Or thus : Integrity with all the happiness it can give or fit for enjoying, were forfeited by the first sin ; God, therefore, when he forms a soul, which by animating a body descended from Adam in the ordinary course of generation, shall constitute one of the persons represented in the federal transaction,—is justified in forming that soul devoid of original righteousness ; and this, with the physically vitiated state of the body, which fits it for the purposes of sin, is sufficient to induce the corruption of the whole nature. The domination of moral evil thus becomes a part of the curse,—a part so essential that without it no other form of the curse could possibly have place.

This view of the subject, confessedly out of the sphere of reason, but not contrary to its dictates, is confirmed by the *miraculous conception* of our Lord’s human nature. This was requisite to break his line of connexion with the first man, that being personally exempted from all federal concern in the first offence, there might be no ground of judicial procedure in his case ; that thus the soul might not be created destitute of holiness, and that the body might be prepared or sanctified, not remedially, but by anticipation, for being the receptacle of a pure spirit. The view is farther confirmed by the *apostolical doctrine* concerning the ground of our moral regeneration. While the Holy Ghost is the agent, the ground is uniformly represented as consisting in an atonement made to divine justice by our Saviour. “Ye are become dead to sin,” as a servant by death is freed from his master ; “Ye are become freed from sin,” as a slave by manumission is released from the right

which his master formerly had and exercised. But how? by being "dead in Christ," who, in a public character, "died to sin," or was freed by his death from all the judicial right which our sin, as charged upon him, had to involve him in the punishment requisite and proper for making atonement. "Ye are become dead to the law, by the body of Christ." Again, "Sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace,"—the law as violated by the first offence or by any offence, "is the strength of sin," gives it its right to reign in moral degradation,—grace is that which not only ensures the remission of the first offence, but "abounds in the remission of many offences," even of all personal transgressions, "to justification of life;"—the scheme of "free gift" being in this superior to the transaction with Adam, according to which "one offence" was sufficient to ruin the whole human race, and in fact did so, by entailing the domination of sin. What does all this mean, but that the ground of judicial procedure must be removed in order to the moral renovation of our nature; and therefore, that God acts as a Judge, or agreeably to the demands of punitive justice, in delivering up mankind to the previous domination of moral evil. These correlate propositions, the writer is fully persuaded after long consideration, are the sum of the apostle's doctrine in Rom. v. vi. vii. already appealed to; and, (without denying the candour of other inquirers,) he is equally persuaded that they furnish the best solution of the difficulty on this mysterious subject,—a solution which the atheist may allow to be probable, and which the Christian will find completely satisfactory.

What then is the amount of our discussion on the existence of moral evil? This:—that while God is the efficient cause of the actions of men only physically, in upholding them as free agents, the moral evil which attaches to these actions is a defect of conformity to a law which the creature was bound to obey;—that God cannot, without being supposed to perform contradictions, uphold them as free agents and prevent this defect, as long as they are in a state of moral degradation; that this moral state, which infallibly deteriorates their actions, commences now with their being; that though it does so, and God is the author of their being, yet, First, He does not infuse any positive principle of malignity, the vitiated state of the body, though positive, being only physical; Secondly, the moral condition of the soul which with the state of the body produces the corruption of the whole man, is mere *defect*, the want of original righteousness, or capacity of displaying free-agency in

good works ; Thirdly, The existence of this defect, is not only justified but imperiously demanded as the *judicial result* of a certain constitution of things, connected with the first entrance of sin into the world, but sufficiently worthy of God.

III. The farther concern of the Deity with the existence of moral evil cannot long detain us. As unfolded by Scripture or exemplified in facts whose character and relations are there fully ascertained, it consists in *limiting* wickedness with regard to its objects, measure, and duration ; and in *directing* it thus limited to glorious ends ; an interference which evidently befits the Supreme, as at once agreeable to his nature and a proper demonstration of his government.

To illustrate by instances, would be to quote a great part of the sacred volume. On the several forms of limitation it is sufficient to refer to Ezek. xxi. 20—22, for the first, which respects the objects ; to Job i. 12 ; ii. 6, for the second, which respects the measure ; and to Isaiah x. 12, 25, for the third, which respects the period of duration. The directive agency, with the several ends proposed, will fully appear in a brief sketch of the divine government as unfolded in Scripture, to be afterwards given. The principles already established supersede the necessity, also, of dwelling on the use which God makes of sinful agents, and of their very impiety and wickedness, in accomplishing his purposes. In addition to our former discussion, it may be sufficient to remark, First, That, according to Scripture, the success of the wicked in criminal courses is no evidence of his approving the immorality which attaches to their actions or motives, though it may indicate an entire approbation of his own purpose, or of the great ends ever worthy of himself, to which all such success is more nearly or remotely adjusted ; and Secondly, That his motives and designs in producing actions relatively wicked, are totally different from those of the creature. What he intends as an intelligent actor, is always conformable to his nature as the Holy One, and to his province as the Judge of all. Then, it is usually the very opposite of what the instruments intend, who are subject to a law, and whose motives go far to determine the moral quality of their deeds. Should it be alleged that human motives themselves may be either good or bad, and should the question be put, Are these independent of the Deity, and is his efficiency and permission solely concerned in the actions of creatures ? The answer is obvious : Both actions and motives fall under one rule in judging of the divine efficiency and permission, though,

for the sake of simplicity, we have chosen hitherto to illustrate the subject by a reference to actions. God physically upholds the faculties of a free agent in the perception of motives and in feeling their influence, permitting at the same time the bad quality or defect in these actings of the mind, which defect, we have seen, he is under no necessity of preventing, either from his own nature or otherwise, if the agent be an innocent creature in a state of probation, while on judicial grounds, as we have also shown, it is altogether unavoidable, if the agent be in a fallen state.

For the purpose of confirming and illustrating these positions, we may appeal to the most prominent fact in the whole economy of divine administrations,—the sufferings of Jesus. “Of a truth, Lord, Herod and Pontius Pilate, and the Gentiles, and people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done.” But surely “they thought not so, neither was it in their hearts.” Although the execution of the divine purpose had been expressly intended by them, it was not their province to fulfil it, or to contribute voluntarily in the slightest degree to its accomplishment. They could not inflict all the sufferings requisite in making satisfaction for sin; and as it belonged not to them to exact this satisfaction, but to the Judge of all, so it was no part of their duty to forward the work, even by contributing in part to the infliction of the requisite sufferings. But how entirely opposed to the divine purpose were their views and motives! They counted Jesus an impostor; God regarded him as his Son and the Saviour of men. They meant to disprove his Messiahship; God, to establish it by fulfilling the prophecies relative to the manner and circumstances of his death, and even realizing the character in that event. They meant to preclude the erection of that spiritual kingdom, which so little accorded with their wishes and expectations; God, to found it for universal expansion. They, in common with the infernal powers under whose instigation they acted, evinced decided antipathy to the character and claims of Jesus; God, as when the fire descended on the victim, showed by the very infliction of the sufferings his high approbation of the sacrifice. They sinned by violating all the laws of justice and humanity; God, in the work partially accomplished by their instrumentality, expressed in the most adequate form his detestation of sin. See Acts xi. 23. iii. 14, 18. Rom. viii. 3.

## II.—THE EXISTENCE AND EFFECTS OF PHYSICAL EVIL.

The only apology to be made for the length of the preceding discussion, is, that it relates to what has always been regarded as the *main difficulty* on the question proposed. If what has been stated be agreeable to reason and scripture, it will aid in the solution of all other difficulties, and render the remaining part of the task comparatively easy.

Physical evil may be viewed as either simply penal or as also corrective. Punishment is clearly the original idea ; for, supposing a Deity, no reason can be assigned, or even conceived, for the existence of physical evil, as destructive of the happiness of creatures, but its absolute necessity for the demonstration of his holiness, and the vindication of his authority. Correction can only be connected with some plan of moral regeneration ; which, if it exist, will be eminently illustrative of divine goodness, and of the triumph of the Deity over physical evil itself, in converting it to purposes most beneficial to the creatures, as well as glorifying to him. But such a plan, we have seen, must involve, as a fundamental arrangement, the previous removal of all judicial grounds of procedure.

Now if punishment be the primary design, the existence of physical evil in all its forms need not surprise us for a moment ; —it was to be expected as the *necessary consequence* of moral evil. The atheist will remember, that we are bound only to reconcile its existence with that of a Deity ; and the form of reasoning is simply this : If there be a God, moral evil exists, for the actions of men are manifestly not conformable to his nature and laws ; but moral evil cannot exist under any form of divine government, without being stigmatised by suitable marks of judicial displeasure ; among these may be the surrender of the fallen to the domination of sin, but as this domination is still moral evil, and productive of a greater prevalence of it, and as, through the power of delusion and habits of depravity, it is usually connected with many imaginary pleasures, something different from it, and more decisively declarative of the divine displeasure, was necessary—something calculated to disturb, and even ultimately destroy, these imaginary pleasures themselves,—something calculated to show the insuperable power of the Deity over sin in its very domination, and to attest the undiminished responsibility of sinful creatures, whatever be the state to which they are surrendered ; and since there are only two species of evil, moral and physical, the latter only

could answer these purposes,—its existence therefore was to be expected. Should we go higher, it would only be to say, that as it is nowise inconsistent with the nature of God to permit the existence of moral evil, and as there may be grounds sufficiently worthy to justify the permission, it cannot be inconsistent with his nature that when the happiness of the creature comes into competition with his glory, the former should in due proportion be sacrificed to the latter, and the superiority of the latter, or its incalculable value, be thus most convincingly attested to all intelligent beings.

The Physical is evidently adapted to the Moral state of the world,—either as originally intended, or as now actually existing. If it be alleged, that there are many things within the sphere of physical evil, by the very constitution of nature, which could not have been different from what they presently are, whether sin had existed or not, noxious plants, carnivorous animals, the tendency of vegetable and animal substances to decay, the scorching power of the sun near the equator, and so on;—we beg leave to suggest, 1st, the power of the Deity to have so modified the human constitution as to have rendered it impassive to these evils; 2dly, the prophetic phraseology employed in describing the removal of the curse, or a great abatement of its visible effects, “the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the bullock, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, they shall not hurt nor destroy,”—for these allusions to the primitive state of things may warrant us to conclude, that prior to the curse the warfare among animals had not taken place, that with regard to man at least, the divine control, the knowledge with which he was endowed, and the majesty of his appearance, were his defence from every thing noxious, and but for the curse would have continued to protect him. It is most probable, however, that God, “to whom all his works are known from the beginning,” originally intending this world to be the scene of all that has happened, so arranged its natural economy at first as to suit a temporary state of innocence, but at the same time be properly adapted to the existence of moral evil, and the whole consequent plan of glorifying himself.—While the state of primeval innocence lasted, the tree of life was, to our first parents, the sacrament and symbol of their present safety as well as of their promised happiness; but in noxious plants, carnivorous animals, and other departments of nature, they might see ministers of vengeance prepared to execute the threatening, should they



transgress. The Scriptures are consistent in representing the lordship of man as for the time acknowledged by all the inferior creatures. And they concur with reason in attesting the penal nature of physical evil as it presently exists. The death of human beings “entered by sin;” and it is “the bondage of corruption” under which “the whole creation now groaneth and travelleth in pain.”

There are two hypotheses on the subject of Physical evil, of which sceptical writers have taken advantage, and which seem to have been incautiously admitted by respondents,—the first, the necessity of universal good,—the second, the necessity of a preponderance of good even among fallen beings. *Universal good*, in point of happiness at least, is so clearly disproved by facts, that no subtilities of argumentation in any attempt to establish the idea of its existence, can ever satisfy the mind. But the error lies in conceding its necessity. At once we perceive, that the hypothesis can have no other basis than the inadmissible idea, that a Deity is absolutely precluded by his nature, both from permitting the existence of Moral Evil, and from choosing to glorify himself by a triumph over it. Unless either or both of these can be proved to involve a contradiction, the hypothesis ought to be dismissed. It will be enough if there be a vast preponderancy of good in the general system. And, 1st, the highest good is the Happiness of the Deity, consisting in the possession and manifestation of his essential perfection. To this, the permission of any thing introductive of misery among the creatures must be adjusted in one form or another, and in some form too, we should expect, which could not otherwise have place. In such case, however, the infringement on creature-happiness is not to be compared with the object to which it is subservient. But, 2d, as it were strange if the Deity could not glorify himself by created beings without involving them all in misery; as in fact, the idea which reason forms of a Deity is not a Being necessarily dreadful, whose happiness is incompatible with that of all other beings, far less a malignant being, who, without regard to the claims of his own glory, wills others to exist merely that they may be miserable,—it must also be expected, that Happiness will exist among the creatures, and that it will greatly preponderate in the universe at large. This brings us to a question of fact, which it seems impossible in our present circumstances to determine. But this impossibility advances nothing against all our other proofs of a Deity. And certainly we have no reason to conclude, that the millions of inhabited worlds which

such a Being in his communicative goodness may have formed, are all subjected to moral evil and its consequences, merely because we are so. The fall of comparatively a small proportion of rational creatures could furnish all the scope that might be requisite for the glorification of the Deity by a triumph over evil. The very restoration of an innumerable multitude of the fallen, and their elevation to higher honours and happiness than they could otherwise have attained, would necessarily constitute a part of the triumph. If we appeal to those Books which give the best account of the origin of evil, they inform us, that all rational beings have not been permitted to fall; and they describe the plan of triumph as involving the restoration and elevation supposed; they show us “a multitude which no man can number out of every tongue and people, and nation, with palms in their hands,” stationed “around the throne” in the highest heavens, and there conjoined with the “innumerable company of angels,” who also stand in the presence of the Almighty, see his glory, and celebrate his praises.

That there ought to be a preponderancy of good, however, even in a fallen state, is a hypothesis still more inadmissible than the former. Take it absolutely, and it would preclude the possibility of any complete vindication of the Deity by physical evil, either in the exile of incorrigible beings whose happiness must be supposed to be entirely destroyed, or in the sufferings of a substitute for the guilty, with whom, for the time, no such preponderance could have place. Take it in relation to a system of forbearance, the necessity recognised by most writers against atheism is incautiously admitted; there can be none. Good to a certain degree must, indeed, be enjoyed, otherwise the idea of forbearance is lost. But why a preponderancy? Is it not enough that the good be proportioned to the nature and designs of forbearance?—Should a preponderancy really be discovered, it will be an argument *a fortiori* of the benignity and mercy of the Deity. In this view we allow, and are happy to appeal to the vast preponderancy of good in the present constitution of the world. Fallen though we are, the ordinances of heaven have not been deranged, nor has the earth been moved from her best position in the system, in order to render our existence absolutely miserable. We have “rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons,” the “sun rises and the showers fall,” for the benefit of both “the just and the unjust.” Our physical capacities of pleasure are not destroyed, nor even greatly impaired. The fecundity of useful animals has not been exchanged for the well-



known, and often-remarked infecundity of those who are less useful or dangerous. The curse of the thistle and the thorn has not surmounted the labours of man ; neither does the earth refuse the reward of his toil. Wars, famine, and pestilence, are not always nor everywhere prevalent. Wickedness itself, naturally calculated to gender confusion in a thousand forms, and to turn “ the world upside down,” is visibly restrained. The supreme Power hath evidently said both to it and to physical evil in general, “ Hitherto shall ye come,”—so far as may not overwhelm all the comfort of existence, or even displace a large proportion of happiness,—“ and no farther ; here shall all your dreadful energies be stayed.” Occasionally he may suffer them to burst the barriers he hath set, but the inundation is neither universal nor permanent, “ they return again to the place he hath commanded for them.” Rather like “ the flood of Egypt,” it ultimately benefits the scene of apparent devastation. By shewing, at any rate, how easily the Deity could accumulate the miseries of man, it serves to render the benignity of that habitual control, which might otherwise escape our attention, at once conspicuous and impressive.

But this forbearance, or system of control, combined with wondrous munificence, which, with regard to the beings who abuse it, could only be justified by a future state of retribution, is, with regard to all other beings, angels, men, and inferior creatures, connected with another scheme still more benignant, by which it is farther regulated and directed to an increase of happiness. It is, according to Scripture, intended to give place for the execution of that God-like scheme which involves the moral regeneration of an innumerable multitude of the human race. This, we are assured, wherever it is effective, gives joy to the angels, who are also honoured to hold a particular station under the Messiah, by whom it is conducted, and to perform offices for the redeemed, which doubtless increase their own felicity. To its immediate subjects it gives instant release from the penal character of all physical evil, renders the pressure which may remain “ light” and beneficial, removes it entirely at last, and compensates for all their sufferings by an overbalancing “ weight of glory,” which it fits them for sustaining. As gradually developed in the extension and effect of the gospel, this wonderful scheme of divine administration tends even to renovate the state of the world,—to dissipate the visible influence of the curse,—to diminish the necessity of judgments,—to augment the sum of public and

social happiness, and in every respect ameliorate the present condition of mankind. In the language of prophecy, a sort of paradisaic state shall return ;—“ Instead of the thorn shall come up the myrtle ; the wilderness and the solitary place shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose ; the wolf shall lie down with the lamb, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.” This language is no doubt figurative, but it marks such a state of things as shall be “ to the Lord for a name, an everlasting memorial,”—shewing to what a vast extent he has counteracted the baleful though necessary influence of physical evil, even in the region of sin, and without departing from his essential rectitude, or sacrificing in the smallest degree the interests of his glory. Eventually, the scheme will effect “ the liberation of the Creature from all the bondage of corruption.”

If the plan of a triumph over moral evil be intrinsically so grand, so supernaturally glorifying to the Deity, and of such general utility in (probably) augmenting the sum of happiness throughout the universe, as to justify his sacrificing to its accomplishment the happiness of many of the rational beings who have fallen, we need not wonder, that in the progress of its execution, a large proportion of the happiness of merely sensitive beings, formed only for temporary existence, should also be sacrificed. The sacrifice, in one degree or another, must have been unavoidable, since physical evil could not be felt by the human race without affecting the inferior creatures. The sacrifice, even of a large proportion of their happiness, might have been expected, under the operation of moral evil, prior to the universal extension and blessed effect of the scheme of recovery in the reign of Messiah. Yet after all, how little has the happiness of the inferior orders been diminished. Most of them seem to enjoy all that their natures will admit, subject only to those casual interruptions and infringements, which, according to present circumstances, contribute to the comfort, the conveniency, or the natural pleasures of man, their original lord. The “ whole creation” of inferior beings, animate and inanimate, is figuratively represented as “ groaning and travelling in pain,” stretching out the neck to look for deliverance, but it is rather as wishing that they were no longer in the unnatural state of being instruments of sin and ministers of wrath, than as oppressed by a load of suffering, of which the inanimate department is certainly incapable. They are represented as preferring their original destination, perhaps as sympathising with “ the children of God,” and thus as desiring the conclusion of the present state of things, that the glory of

the Deity may burst forth with unclouded splendour. The disadvantages and actual sufferings of the inferior creatures, which are more immediately connected with man, and therefore most deeply affected by his moral state, shall be greatly diminished by the general diffusion of mercy, benignity, and other Christian virtues, in the millennial age. And though the inferior animals are not destined to participate in the final release from the bondage of corruption, by a resurrection from the dead; though even those which are alive at the consummation of all things must perish with the works of men, in the conflagration of the world, as beings whom the Deity is nowise obligated to continue in existence; it belongs to the scheme of making all things new, that such part of the works of God as there is no necessity for destroying, be liberated from all its involuntary subjection to vanity, and from every vestige of deterioration by human transgression. Rom. viii. 19—23. 2 Pet. iii. 5—7, 10, 12. Rev. xxi. 2—5.

It is plainly in reference to these results of the peculiar scheme of divine government in its progress and completion, that when the reign of Messiah is foretold in the prophets or celebrated in the Psalms, “the heavens and the earth” are invited to rejoice, “the world and all its inhabitants, the mountains and hills,” the very “trees of the wood,” and every thing that liveth in the earth,—“to rejoice before the Lord, because he comes to judge the world.” And in the visions of John, as soon as this judgment or administration was committed to the Saviour, the song of the *redeemed* was heard, followed by the song of the *angels*, and this again by the voice of “every creature which is in heaven, and the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, saying, Blessing and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.”—Ps. xcvi. xcvi. Rev. v.

### III.—UNEQUAL DISTRIBUTION.

On this head we shall take up at present solely the idea of *partiality*, reserving the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous for distinct consideration.

The objection or difficulty is this: “We perceive many apparently partial distinctions in the world. Though all men must be equally related to a Deity, one is born heir to a large estate, is afterwards exalted to affluence, while another languishes in poverty and misery; the rich man is clothed in

purple, and fares sumptuously every day, while his brother in nature, and therefore at least his equal in claim, lies clothed in rags, perhaps covered with ulcers, at his gate. Some spend their years in prosperity, while others fail in all their enterprises, and are never able to rise above the penury of their lot. There are in the world high and low, rich and poor; and the mental discrimination is as great as the corporeal: some have strong powers, pre-eminent talents, and many advantages for improving them, all which are denied unto others." Such indeed is the state of things in the world, and therefore the atheist concludes, "that there is no God, because a Deity must be no respecter of persons;" and the Christian, believing that God is, and that he is no respecter of persons, yet supposing that in these distinctions there is something of this kind, either doubts the existence of a special providence, or feels his mind embarrassed, to the great disturbance of his spiritual exercise. The one proceeds chiefly on the idea of original equality in claims; the other, recognising the idea of penal evil in physical disadvantages, is persuaded that in this respect, too, all are originally on a level, and therefore conceives the difficulty rather aggravated than lessened.

Most true it is, that there can be no partiality with God: For let us consider wherein the respecting of persons properly consists. Does it not lie in attending to something different from the true characteristic of the person or his cause? Among men, this error appears, when our esteem and good-will are guided solely by exterior considerations,—when rank, power, riches or grandeur so secure our attachments as to render us blind to all other considerations, especially to those which ought to be principally taken into view as the proper basis of esteem. Again, we are guilty of respecting persons, when our conduct in bestowing favours is regulated by similar motives, rather than by the claims of necessity or justice. We perceive something perhaps in one individual, that suits our taste, inclinations, or habits, and allowing this to operate to the disadvantage of others who have equal or stronger claims to the countenance or help we bestow, are justly said to be prejudiced in his favour. That some respect should be had to civil distinctions, and to natural talents or acquirements, will be readily granted. The order of society demands it, and it can be productive of no detriment, provided we also assign their due place to moral qualifications, take care that our favour or charity be not monopolized by certain classes or individuals, and as to

all claims of right endeavour to walk by the rules of strict justice. But farther, we may be partial with regard to the services done us, as well as the favours we bestow. The same good office done by one, perhaps, does not please so much, nor produce so much gratitude, as when done by another. Pre-occupied by certain sympathies or recommendations, men are apt to be satisfied with every thing or any thing done by the person to whom they have taken a liking, while nothing howsoever well done by another can please them. Finally, partiality is shown when, in judging, our decision is not according to the truth of the case, but proceeds on considerations which belong to the person rather than his cause.

If this be a just description, then it is plain partiality can have no place in any of its forms with a Deity. But where are the facts in the history of providence that can be said to exemplify any of the forms in which it may appear? Among men the acceptance of persons is occasioned by some illusion of the imagination or pre-occupation of the heart. It must be traced to one or more of these sources,—an unaccountable predilection,—an ill-founded or ill-regulated prejudice,—a sense of dependance on the person, either on the principle of fear or of hope, perhaps because our pleasures are concerned in the matter, and we have either derived, or expect to derive, some gratification from him,—finally, the influence of sensible things upon us. But as none of these causes can possibly be found with the Deity, having established his existence by the proper proof, we ought to conclude *a priori* that we must be mistaken and imposed upon by appearances, when at any time we are tempted to ascribe the effect to him. He is by his essential perfection absolutely independent. His several attributes place him beyond the possibility of error or precipitation; for his knowledge is such that nothing can escape or elude it, his wisdom forms the most just estimate of things according to the universal range of his knowledge, and justice and holiness characterise all that he does in fulfilling the dictates of his wisdom. By his Majesty and Supremacy he is lifted high above all the petty distinctions which bulk so much in the view of men. Within the compass of his Sovereign control are all the means of equalizing men in the various circumstances of life, and in death and judgment, as they are equalized by him in their birth and infirmities. He is alike related to all as the former of their bodies and the father of their spirits, their common Creator, Legislator, and Judge. And his throne

is the last tribunal, where, if anywhere, justice must be rigidly exercised, where all human mismanagements must be corrected, and all grievances redressed.

But lest the facts presented by the state of things in the world should obscure the very proofs of a Deity, and thus blunt the force of the argument *a priori* that we must be mistaken in imputing partiality, or lest, believing in a God, the very conception of his nature and excellences should be thought at variance with the facts, and thus be assigned as the very basis of the difficulty,—let us examine how the concurring verdict of Reason and Scripture, that God “is no respecter of persons,” *consists with the facts*. It will not be alleged that any evidence exists of his making the merely outward distinctions which exist among men the rule of his procedure in estimating their characters, in showing favour to them, in accepting their services, or in judging them at last. And is it not clear that in the origin or first formation of these distinctions, which seems to be what the difficulty respects, he cannot be deemed an acceptor of persons, since no one had a previous or better claim to them than another? To respect persons is to be dazzled by something which pre-occupies the mind in favour of this or the other individual, some previous quality or distinction; but before conferring the distinctions of which we have spoken, all were on a level,—the distinctions did not exist, nor any natural fitness in some for receiving them in preference to others, and they could not even in the way of motive be the causes of their own existence. It cannot be said that he is pre-occupied in favour of those who are distinguished by their predetermined or foreseen moral and spiritual excellence; for then, the righteous and none else would be the objects of his temporal benefactions. But it is the bad man that is clothed in purple and fine linen and fares sumptuously every day, and the good Lazarus that lies in rags at his gate. To show that God is no respecter of persons in the distribution of temporal favours, is indeed one reason among many why the righteous are often less the objects of these than the wicked. —Again, to respect persons is to favour some to the prejudice or disadvantage of others who had also a just claim to the favour shown. But no one, as a creature of God, and especially as a fallen creature, has any claim beyond another, or any just claim at all upon him, for the riches, honours, or talents, in which worldly distinctions consist. If therefore this man is exalted and that man depressed, no just and original claim of the latter is disregarded for the sake of the former. The latter

might have been better had he been in the station of the former, but he is not by the exaltation of his neighbour made worse than he deserved to be, or defrauded of any right for his sake.

It is, farther, a great error on this and similar subjects, to confine our attention to the individual who is favoured, without taking into view his relation to others, and the relation of events in his lot to other events, and in general the varied connexions and dependencies of all distinctions and all dispensations. When one is exalted and another depressed, it is manifestly not for the sake of these persons alone, but for the sake of others, and often because the accomplishment of divine purposes, even with regard to the world at large, required that it should be so. Joseph was elevated, not simply to compensate for the ill treatment which he as an individual had previously received, but for the sake of the Egyptians, and of his father's household, and because the events of his life were links in the grand chain which introduced the Jewish economy, and passing through it, terminated in the coming and kingdom of the promised Messiah. But abstracting from the secret purposes of God, the case holds as to the obvious design of conferring worldly distinctions. When favours are bestowed, it is with a view to general advantage. They are given as a trust to be improved for the good of the community, as far as the influence of those who receive them extends. To disprove the idea of any predilection on God's part for the individuals who are distinguished by eminent talents, or exalted to power and affluence, they are often decidedly the objects of his hatred, and obviously used by him only for promoting the good of society, or if this be foreign to their temper, for accomplishing other necessary purposes. But in all cases, the gift, benefit, talent, or honour, though it be personal in regard to him who receives it, is common in regard to God's design in bestowing it. What are the rich? Not intended by him to be misers, secreting the wealth that might be useful to others, but to be stewards of the benefits of heaven, like the fountains opened and replenished in the natural world for the purpose of fertilizing the region around them. Every one cannot be a steward, as every spot cannot be a fountain,—this would be an evident disadvantage; but the fountain is not filled for its own sake. How manifestly were the grandeur, power, and authority of rulers supreme and subordinate, bestowed, not for the sake of the persons, but for the benefit of all! God, in their elevation, had a respect to even the poor and needy, and him that hath no helper,—no friend to protect him or see to the justice of



his cause. On the same principle, mental endowments and all the advantages of learning render those who have received them debtors to those from whom God has withheld them, but to whom nevertheless he assuredly had a respect, in providing for the progress of science and the general diffusion of useful knowledge, by the very distinctions conferred. Behold then the wisdom of God in the scope he hath given to his power without diminishing aught of his goodness. He hath augmented the number and beauty of his works by diversifying the rational, just as he has done the natural world, where every flower and shrub has a form, a tinge, and a fragrance all its own. At the same time, he hath realized to the rational world all the advantages of social connexions and relations, by making secular distinctions a common stock, held indeed by certain individuals, but held for the profit and comfort of all.

But we go farther still to say, that the inequality produced by these distinctions is not nearly so great in its effect on human happiness as hath been imagined. As we ought not to fix our attention on the individual alone, but to consider his relation to society, so, in thinking of the individual, we ought not to confine our view to one precise period of his life, but to take a survey of the whole, and to estimate also the kind of favour which is shown him. There is no one entirely prosperous, or completely miserable, through the whole course of his life; every one has his seasons of joy as well as of sorrow, of repose and contentment as well as of sore travail, and many too, very many proofs of the goodness, patience, and long-suffering of God. Contentment itself greatly equalizes mankind, and this is often the native result of a certain degree of abasement, or of a situation less favourable than that which others enjoy. The person to whom such a lot hath fallen never knew the luxuries so much prized by others, and therefore cannot feel the want of them as a loss, or any special disadvantage. He becomes familiarized to his condition, climate, or country, feels himself as happy there as others in more favoured circumstances, and learns even to prefer it to these. Then contentment in a higher sense is often bestowed with poverty and distress, and this equalizes the supposed unhappy subject with the great and prosperous in the earth, nay often lifts him above them, since their ambition usually renders them less content, and therefore less happy than he. No situation is exempted from cares, and the more that men possess, the heavier does the burden of care become, the more severe too the sensation of loss, when



their possessions are affected by the vicissitudes of time, or about to be torn from them by death. No situation is exempted from temptations, and high places with great affluence are so much encumbered with this disadvantage as to be less enviable than many suppose ; the heart is apt to be fascinated by the world, and the means of gratifying evil propensities are multiplied. It is, indeed, more owing to our evil passions and inordinate desires, than to the inequality of divine distributions, that we feel so uneasy, or imagine the inequality to be so great and oppressive. Then we ought to remember that worldly distinctions are not the best blessings which a Deity is able to confer, or which God has actually brought within our reach. They are not the decisive proofs of his favour, but the mere results of certain general laws of providence, which again are only subordinate to a higher scheme of dispensations for glorifying himself, and insuring happiness to the rational creature.

“ But is not this very scheme characterised by favouritism from first to last ? Witness the Jews said to be selected by God in preference to every other people, and made the exclusive depositaries of sacred privilege. Is there no partiality imputed to the Deity, when he is represented as constituting Abraham his peculiar friend, restricting his covenant to Isaac, preferring Jacob to Esau before the children were born, and respecting the Jews for their fathers’ sakes ? Witness, too, the advantages conferred on certain nations, under the Christian economy, to the manifest disregard of others whose claims must have been equal. And what account shall be made of the moral restoration of only certain individuals in these nations, while the supernatural influence which is said to be necessary for producing that effect is withheld from the rest ? ” It is thus the serious may often be perplexed, and the sceptic may attempt to turn against us the doctrine of that very plan of dispensations to which we resort for the best explanation of the ways of God.

In the facts appealed to, there is, we are ready to confess, a striking display of divine sovereignty, the independent liberty of God ; and why should not this high prerogative be displayed as well as the attributes on which it is founded ? The means and the manner of demonstration, even in the instances specified, reflect not the slightest discredit on that absolute rectitude which must ever be regarded as essential to the divine nature. The sacred writers, from whom the facts are adduced, most decidedly ascribe the selection of nations and individuals to the sovereign will, or good pleasure of the Most High. In the counsels of mercy, to the execution of which alone the difficulty

refers, the human race are considered, not as yet to be created, but as created and fallen, and all on a level,—one *corrupted mass* out of which the Deity might either form “vessels of mercy” or not as he pleased. Rom. ix. xi. Now, this is the very ground on which partiality, or respect to any thing as pre-occupying the divine mind in favour of some to the prejudice of others, is denied. All were on a level, but it was in the total destitution of any claim on divine favour whatever. Even that to which God might righteously have had respect did not exist. No nation, no individual, presented any distinction which God could acknowledge as worthy of attracting his regard, or determining his choice. The Jews were manifestly chosen, prior to their existence, and thus prior to all the privileges, they afterwards possessed; these were the results of the choice. It is upon this principle, accordingly, that the folly of their boasting is exposed. They conceived that God must respect them because of the high prerogatives by which they were distinguished. How could God, (to adopt their own absurd idea,) be prejudiced in their favour by privileges which did not exist with them previous to his own sovereign appointment, which, as facts had also proved, were not conferred because they were better than other nations, and which, or even superior privileges, he was equally free to bestow upon others? The proper question was, how had they profited by these privileges? for moral or spiritual excellence is the only thing that God can respect without violating the essential equity of his nature; and it is because he will look to this as the subject of complacential regard, and to nothing else, that in the sacred discussion of this very point, he is expressly pronounced “to be no respecter of persons.” See Rom. ii. 5—11. But according to the doctrine of the sacred writers, even this species of excellence, which God may regard in giving proofs of complacency, and which alone he will regard in deciding on character, could no more than the external privileges intended to produce it, be considered in the order of nature as previously existing to determine his original selection. Rom. ix. 11—13. Eph. i. 4, 5, 6. 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14.

There are many indications that God, in selecting the Jews to be his peculiar people, had solely a respect to his own plan of glorifying himself by that triumph over moral evil, which, we have seen, involves also a vast augmentation of the sum of general happiness. Having appointed a Saviour, it was requisite that the true religion should be preserved in some quarter of the world or another till he came; for, otherwise, his com-

ing might have been prevented by an imperious call for another mode of proceeding with mankind. The antediluvian method of preserving and transmitting the true religion had proved so ineffectual, that almost total apostasy preceded the flood; and since the same method transferred to the new world, and even seconded by all the terrors of the flood, soon began to give way before the rapid advance of superstition and idolatry, to prevent another deluge, or a still more awful catastrophe inconsistent with the grand purpose of the Deity, it was necessary that some new measure should be resorted to,—a measure congenial to the object in view, and otherwise properly adjusted to the plan. This we find was the separation of a people to be the depositaries of revealed truth and of sacred privilege, till the requisite preparations should be made for introducing the effective scheme of recovery in the reign of Messiah. Rom. iii. 1—3. Eph. i. 9, 10. Was there respect of persons here? Or was not the general good consulted as a part of the god-like purpose? That this purpose was in view, and not any previous regard to Abraham, appears from God's choosing that patriarch to be the father of the segregated nation, rather than Melchizedek his contemporary, who seems to have been equal in excellence, if not originally preferable,—Abraham being connected with idolaters, while Melchizedek was “priest of the most high God.” Josh. xxiv. 2. 15. Deut. xxvi. 5. Gen. xiv. 18, 19. Upon the very same principle that directed the choice of Abraham, the latter was not chosen,—that in his own place he might subserve the great purpose by pre-indicating the vast superiority of the promised Messiah to all the priests who should descend from Abraham; thus notifying at the very time when the segregation was made, that only a preparatory scheme was intended by it. Heb. vii. 1, 4, 7.

If the Jews were “beloved for the fathers' sakes,” it was neither from respect to the persons of the patriarchs, which always lands in the presumption of previous good works influencing the divine choice, nor from respect to their own persons as descended of the patriarchs, which was evidently the import of their foolish boast, “we have Abraham to our father.” Both opinions prevailed among the Jews, and are accordingly combated in the apostolical writings. The true idea was, God's respect to his own promise made to the fathers, and to the development of his great purposes agreeably to its import. The Jews are still “beloved for the fathers' sakes,” as interested in the covenant of promise, which ensures their conversion under the reign of Messiah. But that God is no respecter of per-

sons because of their descent from the patriarchs, appears not only from the rejection first of the family of Ishmael, and next of the family of Esau, but from his casting off the Jews themselves, when their existence, as a favoured people, interfered with the very design of committing the promise to their fathers,—the blessing of all families of the earth in Christ.

If we be now asked, why the Effective Administration was so long delayed, to the great disadvantage of the Gentiles ; and why its efficiency has been so little felt, or restricted to such narrow limits, since the time of its commencement ? we can only say, that these wonders, so stumbling to human beings, who are ever apt to be partial to their own interests, doubtless appeared to the Deity the best calculated to promote his own great Design, and to render the progressive and final triumph over evil more illustrious than it would otherwise have been. But “ O the depth both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! how unsearchable are his ways, and his judgments past finding out ! ”—It might be proper to aggrandize the coming and reign of Messiah by a vast system of preparations. It might be proper to have the whole earth replenished with inhabitants, and to suffer moral evil to exhibit its various malignant aspects in every country,—to shew itself among every kindred and people as the indelible character of our race, unaffected by national peculiarities, and neither effaced by civilization, nor rendered illegible by the rudeness of a savage condition. This universality of evil so completely evinced, while it would constitute the reign of the Old Serpent, the spirit to be vanquished, might also be connected with the vindication of Deity, by establishing the truth of the primitive transaction with man, and thus suggesting the true rationale of human depravity.—At the same time it might be proper to pre-establish an extensive demonstration of the total inefficiency of political skill, philosophical speculations, and all human institutions for releasing mankind from the domination of sin, or even ensuring their temporal happiness.—Equally proper might it be to bring forward a long protracted proof of the inefficacy of all human forms of expiation, for removing that judicial sentence, on the repeal of which our moral restoration depends. Connected with this, the repeated revolts of the Jews themselves during the period of delay, and their ultimate great degeneracy, might serve to disprove the efficacy of even divinely appointed forms of expiation, such as belonged to the preparatory system, when these are detached from their proper relation to the Great Atonement, the true basis of renovating influence, and the only thing that

could ever render them worthy of divine institution.—The facts in the history of the Jews and of the world tally with this induction of propriety, and the Holy Scriptures confirm the view which it gives. The nature of the Jewish economy, as a grand preparatory system, is fully ascertained. The previous process furnished the proper proof that God alone can effect a triumph over moral evil, that it must be effected by special interposition, and in a manner worthy of divine holiness and justice. The insufficiency of animal sacrifice and multiplied offerings for sin had been felt. The necessity of the true atonement and of the reign of spiritual influence had been evinced. Among the nations, philosophy had failed to regenerate mankind; “the world by wisdom knew not God.” Political systems of restraint had also failed to answer their ends. Corruption and oppression had debased the very tribunals of justice; “all the foundations of the earth were gone out of course.” It was “the fulness of the time.” It was the *crisis* of the world. Either universal judgment must speedily ensue, or God must arise and subject all nations to a more effective scheme of government. This he had intended. With a view to it he had “winked at the times of ignorance” among the Gentiles, who were not so highly favoured as the Jews. And the whole previous state of affairs was deemed requisite to evince the necessity of the Mediatorial administration, attest its divinity, and aggrandize its effects. Epistle to the Hebrews. Isaiah liii. 1 Cor. i. Psalm lxxxii. John xii. 31, 32; xvi. 11.

If the effects of the gospel and the Reign of Heaven have not yet been universally felt, this may be greatly owing to the culpable negligence of those who enjoy the privileges of the kingdom, in not more eagerly endeavouring to diffuse them; but it may also, in some degree, be owing to the nature of the system, which cannot be imposed, but must just make its way in the world by gradual encroachments on the deeply-rooted and long-established opposing interests. To undo the charge of partiality, it is enough to remark, that the true religion was twice universal,—in the days of Adam, and in the days of Noah; and that now its Christian form is again accommodated to every kindred and people. It bears no marks of specialty. “Is he the God of the Jews, and not of the Gentiles also?” But to pass other considerations; if it was a part of the divine plan that moral evil, in order to develop all its malignity, should be allowed to prevail to a great extent and for a long season against the purity of the Christian religion, subjecting the faithful to grievous persecutions, and involving others in

the aggravated guilt of apostacy,—and if it also belonged to the plan, that this grand apostacy should be visited by a series of judgments comprehending “the last plagues, in which the wrath of God is filled up,”—then it must appear to have been comparatively better that till all these things were accomplished, the majority of the nations should remain unenlightened. The gospel, in this case, or the spiritual reign of Messiah intended for the renovation of the world, would not be disparaged, by seeming to have failed even after attaining the universality requisite for accomplishing its object. Multitudes, also, by being allowed to remain in the state of heathenism, would not be involved in the aggravated guilt of the Grand Apostacy, emphatically styled “the mystery of iniquity.” And the sphere of that accumulated wrath with which the corruption of Christianity must be visited, in order to a demonstration of the divine triumph over evil in its worst forms, would be greatly abridged. The meliority which, on these suppositions, must at once be admitted, is confirmed by the testimony of Scripture. All that we have supposed did really belong to the divine plan. And we are informed, that after the judgment of “the last plagues” in which “the wrath of God,” to be executed during the present constitution of things, “is filled up,” Satan shall be bound, all nations shall be reclaimed, and the whole earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord, for a period sufficient to shew how truly, and how extensively, he can make “the cause of truth, meekness, and righteousness,” to triumph in the very region of sin, and prior to the total separation of the one system from the other. Rev. xvi.—xx.

#### IV.—THE SUFFERINGS OF THE GOOD.

Even the atheist must admit, that there are persons in the world whose habits, manners, and general deportment, are less noxious to themselves and society, than those of others. The Christian recognises virtue of a higher order. He knows that although “there is not a just man on the earth who sinneth not,” there are many whose hearts have been “directed into the love of God,”—many whom the Scriptures designate men of uprightness, “good, holy, righteous, godly.” These, we might expect, would be visibly favoured by Heaven. Observation and experience, however, evince the contrary; and the Scriptures themselves, which have drawn the character, and determined its moral worth, allow that “the afflictions of the



righteous are many." Job, though declared to have been an "upright man," one who "feared God and eschewed evil," was yet delivered up to a malignant power, and subjected to an almost overwhelming succession of calamities; and others, "of whom the world was not worthy," are described as driven to deserts, compelled to wander in mountains, and lodge in dens and caves of the earth, "being destitute, afflicted, tormented." The Scriptures not only fearlessly and impartially record these and many similar facts of the strangest and most stumbling description, but also distinctly portray the doubts, the atheistical reasonings and impious thoughts which the sufferings of the righteous, viewed in connexion with the prosperity of the wicked, may naturally suggest. "Behold," said Asaph, "these are the ungodly, who prosper in the earth; I am chastened all day long; verily I have cleansed my hands in vain." The profligate, he adds, take occasion from this state of things, to scoff at the idea of a special Providence: "Thus, they say, How doth God know? Is there, indeed, knowledge with the Most High?"—does he observe or regard the conduct of men? Ps. lxxiii. The fool,—the more daring, but less rational still,—goes farther, and draws the conclusion most congenial to his wishes, saying in his heart, "There is no God." Ps. xiv. liii. These very statements, so faithfully, and at the same time so fully and fearlessly made, intimate that the facts are nowise inconsistent with the plan of the divine government unfolded in Scripture, and that all objections founded upon them will vanish under a right conception of that plan, or even such a measure of knowledge as the simplest inquirer may be able to attain by studying the Sacred Oracles. At the same time the mystery of providence is admitted to be so great, that the full persuasion of the presidency of a God, who must necessarily favour those who serve him in spirit and in truth, and of the actual termination of his favour upon them notwithstanding all appearances to the contrary, belongs to the province of Faith, as it requires a proper apprehension of the kind of rewards by which his favour is expressed, of the certainty of these, and of the manner in which they have been provided. "He that cometh to God must *believe* that he is, and that he is the rewarder of all those who diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 3. Till, by some striking alteration of circumstances, either here or in our transition to the state of celestial glory, we are released from the scene of mystery, and thus from all the perplexity apt to be occasioned by unfavourable appearances or strange dispensations, we must "take heed" to the sacred oracles, "as to

a light that shineth in a dark place," and particularly "to the sure word of prophecy," which, in unfolding the plan of divine government, treats of the prospects of the church, and sets before us the present and final rewards of the faithful. 2 Pet. i. 19, 20, 21. If it shall appear, that the sufferings even of those whose excellence is of the highest order, so far from being inconsistent with the rectitude of divine procedure, eminently tend to the glory of God, there will be little to object in regard to the lot of others, and that little will fall to be considered under the concluding article of supposed inequality in the distribution of rewards and punishments.

First, then, let it be considered, that the righteous, even of the highest order, as long as they are members of human society, must necessarily experience the common vicissitudes of life. Their character could not exempt them without disturbing the ordinary course of things, which is the best adapted to the present state of mankind. Nor is there any good reason why they should be exempted, but much to the contrary. Were all the righteous elevated to the summit of prosperity, or even placed above mediocrity, then all the poor, who are usually the most numerous class, must be wicked, a state of things which could not possibly be sustained without miraculous interference. How many other evils would follow!—religion dishonoured by the imputation of the basest motives to its followers, as when it was said, "Doth Job fear God for nought? behold thou hast blessed the work of his hand, and increased his greatness on every side;" the fearers of God advanced to a dangerous conspicuity, which might foster pride in themselves, while it exposed them to the envy and malignity of others; carnal inducements, incompatible with the nature of religion, held out to the ungodly; the Deity blasphemed as a respecter of persons, for aggrandizing individuals on account of virtues which relate more to his own service than to the general state of mankind. Either all who possessed the qualifications proper for managing secular affairs to the best purpose must have been pious also; or, if without these qualifications the godly had been uniformly invested with secular power and all its accompanying honours, place would have been given for the accusation of respecting them on account of their religious character in matters to which that character did not apply. All this is avoided by leaving them to their share in the ordinary scheme of allotments, and honouring them secretly or invisibly with rewards appropriate to their character. Room is thus made for a special discriminative intercourse between the Deity and the



best of his creatures, without infringing, in the smallest degree, upon the order which must necessarily belong to a general system of forbearance.

This leads us to say, farther, that according to Scripture, the righteous are under a peculiar system of government, which affects and controls all their allotments in the general system. This is that federal dispensation denominated the New Covenant. It is said to be "ordered in all things,"—in its very reference to the course of events, adapted to the state, the character, the capacities, and the lot of its subjects; and then it is "sure"—incapable of being subverted or made void by any occurrence in the scheme of unequal distribution. This covenant does not require the exemption of its subjects from physical evils, so as to give place to any of the consequences already enumerated, for it leaves them all for the present in a state of moral imperfection. Were they absolutely perfect, it would be clearly unjust to expose them to the smallest degree of suffering. But as long as there are with them any relics of sin, there can be no reason for complaint though they share with others the various evils of life. In consequence of the absolute perfection of their state before God, as justified through the merits of Christ, there can be no doubt that they might all be exempted, not only from death, like Enoch and Elias, but from every species of suffering, without any violation of the claims of justice, as they might all be perfected also in personal sanctity, from the first moment of saving interest in Christ. But this method of procedure, would not have consisted with other arrangements for accomplishing in the best manner the grand purpose of a triumph over evil; and therefore while the right to deliverance and perfection is fully recognised, God is pleased to delay both for a season. The justified are left to feel the existence, and sometimes the prevalence of *moral evil*, after they have attained the requisite capacity for forming a true estimate of its odious nature, that their views may coincide more fully with those of the Deity, that an ardent desire of his triumph over it, both in themselves and others, may be excited, and that their felicity even in the prospect of that triumph, but especially in its completion at last, may be augmented. Rom. vii. 21—25; viii. 10, 11. The imperfection of their moral state, again, vindicates their liability to *physical evil*, and accounts for all the extent in which it is allowed to befall them. Beloved of God though they be, they must still be made experimentally to know that "it is a bitter thing" to forsake him, or even "to fail and

come short of his glory." Jer. ii. 19. Prov. iii. 12. At the same time, agreeably to their justified state, there is nothing of a *penal* nature, the true result or proper execution of the curse, in all their afflictions. Rom. v. 1, 3 ; viii. 1, 38, 39. And this truth, though primarily a matter of faith, is fully confirmed by sensible proofs, in the obviously beneficial effects of their sufferings, the rich consolations they enjoy, and the holy resigned temper they are enabled to preserve. Rom. v. 1—5. Heb. xii. 5—11.

It is to be expected that the very character of the righteous will subject them even to a larger share of afflictions than others. Are they not only amended, but in Scripture-phrase "renewed in the spirit of their minds?" Then the manners of the world will be foreign to their temper, and their righteous souls must often be vexed in seeing and hearing what passes around them. Many things in the ordinary intercourse of mankind, which create no uneasiness to others, will press heavy upon them, as persons feelingly alive to moral rectitude and propriety of conduct, compassionate too, easily moved, and apt in hopeless cases to be deeply affected by the sufferings of their fellow-men. Join to these mental afflictions, the sorrows occasioned by their own imperfection, their consciousness of sin, and their deep sense of its evil, and all the peculiar distress farther occasioned by certain changes of spiritual state, which overthrow their comfort, and mark to them the divine displeasure, in ways with which others are entirely unacquainted. Then persecution, in one form or another, cannot but attach to the lot of all who will live godly in the present state of society. They will be exposed to no inconsiderable disadvantage even from the course of things in the world, while their views and principles, their veneration for God, their very honesty and integrity, deter them from complying with many practices which are too often the road to wealth and distinction. But positive persecution, also, could hardly be prevented without a miracle, so long as the good are mingled with the bad, and the latter either form the majority, or have the means of displaying their hostility to the former. Such, indeed, is that hostility, that if the afflictions of the righteous be not more abundant than those of other men, it must be owing to peculiar restraint, a control exercised in their behalf, which, though not miraculous, is yet productive of a certain deviation from what would naturally happen, and is therefore, in fact, a proof of special regard. Exemption, even to any considerable extent, from the common evils of life, or from these peculiar afflictions, might be

apt, in the case of beings still morally imperfect, to prove very unfriendly to religion. Might it not seem to favour the idea that there was little or nothing about them offensive to God? Would not the sense of dependance be greatly weakened? And would not the fond imagination that this is the place of their rest, find readier entertainment, or acquire a stronger influence? A reluctance to quit with the present scene would be fostered, productive, in its turn, of a species of rebellion against the edict appointing them to die. Compassion for the other class of men, as fellow-creatures, though wicked, would be greatly blunted by want of analogous experience in the godly. Serious reflection, leading to a proper estimate of past conduct, could seldom be awakened. Add to all this, that religion itself in the present imperfect state must necessarily involve some painful exercises, and require many sacrifices nowise naturally agreeable to flesh and blood. Much of it must lie in contrition for sin, in resisting the influence of the world, in attempting to overcome its allurements, in withstanding its manners, and in disregarding its frowns. God, in a word, may show his love to those who fear him, just by counteracting their ill-regulated wishes, and refusing to indulge them, as he may do others, to their ruin. How otherwise should they be preserved blameless to the eternal compensations of another world? And how otherwise should the hope of these very compensations be brightened and assured, the desire of them cherished, and meetness for them advanced?

And now what is there in this order of things unworthy of a Deity? Does it not rise to view as a most fit and admirable department of that plan by which he might glorify himself by a triumph over evil? Without it the reality of the triumph could not be so well attested, nor its perfection unfolded. We should want much evidence of what a Deity can do. For, 1st, with regard to moral evil,—before the Almighty create a new heavens and earth, wherein righteousness alone shall dwell, must it not greatly conduce to his glory, to give scope for an exhibition of pure and undefiled religion in the various forms of patience, fortitude, faith, and hope,—forms in which it cannot afterwards exist? There may, perhaps, be no reason why Lazarus should drag out a wretched life, or Job be subjected to accumulated sufferings, but simply the vindication of religion, by showing that it is neither a mercenary principle in those who possess it, nor a scheme of worldly aggrandizement in God's intention. For the honour of him who is both the author and object of religion, and for the good of those to whom

it is prescribed, it is doubtless expedient that some such cases of suffering should be permitted. The end would, indeed, be frustrated by making them common, and common they are not. But how signally is the honour of religion sustained by those that occur ! Its truth, its excellence, and its stability when unsupported by prosperity, are all impressively displayed. Is not the reality and the power of a supernatural influence also convincingly proved ? And does not virtue itself, in the various principles of a new and obviously divine nature, shine forth with the most attractive lustre ? In the moral, as in the natural system, the darkness of night reveals much of celestial beauty, eminently glorifying to God, that could not otherwise be seen. Had not the sun of prosperity gone down upon Job, his patience had not appeared so conspicuously as a star of the first magnitude. Then, next to the sufferings of Christ, the afflictions of the righteous furnish the most striking attestation of God's insuperable hatred of sin. They show that he cannot excuse it even in the objects of his love, and that nothing can produce the least change in him favourable to it, neither its being pardoned sin, nor the high character of those who commit it. Occasional instances of accumulated suffering, in those who are regarded by him as the only worthy part of mankind, impressively admonish others of the dreadful nature of sin, and the certainty of punishment. They at the same time prove, what it is proper should ever be kept in view, how truly and how largely all men are indebted to divine forbearance. There is enough of sin about the best to justify the severest inflictions, as Job was constrained to acknowledge ; but how seldom is the severity which God has shown might justly be employed even in paternal correction, exemplified ! Assuredly, then, in the present state, he never punishes any of the ungodly " as their iniquities deserve." The troubles of the righteous, in fact, illustrate his *benignity*, both as a Father and as a Judge ; and in this view, besides all their happy influence on those who endure them, are calculated to have the farther beneficial effect of exciting the ungodly to serious reflection, and leading them to repentance. " If these things," said Jesus, " be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry ?" And on a similar principle, " If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end be of them who obey not the gospel ? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear ?" 1 Pet. iv. 17, 18.

2dly, With regard to physical evil, hath not the Deity triumphed also over this, if he hath made it contrary to its nature

#### THE SUFFERINGS OF THE GOOD.

inally penal character, the instrument of good,—of good, not only to beings who look on and behold the God, but even to the subjects who have unhappily under its power. Since physical evil must have been only a method of displaying the divine triumph over evil, and since, as appears from the case of the incorrigible, it could have answered this purpose without being changed into that species of victory which consists in the change did not seem essential to the Grand Purpose of the Deity; he hath, therefore, attached it to his plan. One victory over it, indeed, is essential, as the only means of effecting the purpose in any way connected with the real and eternal good of the creature. Accordingly in *the sufferings of Jesus Christ*, by a most judicious arrangement of circumstances, physical evil, even in its penal character as an infliction of the curse, hath been converted into an instrument of good. Its tendency to do evil is completely counteracted;—it did not prove destructive to the person who suffered, and its very infliction, though it seemed the desert of the millions in whose name he suffered, and foreboding their ruin, hath become the basis of their relief and everlasting felicity. But do we not see its tendencies also counteracted in *the afflictions of the* 2 How kind their intention! How benefited their

difficulty furnished by divine revelation. It hath "brought life and immortality to light;" it assures us that even what "is sown in corruption shall be raised in glory." It will ever fortify the saint against atheistical surmises, while he "looks not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at those which are unseen and eternal." Entering the sanctuary of God, and there beholding "the beauty of the Lord," in the wondrous plan of redemption and all its correlates, he will attain the relief which Asaph found, and the persuasion in which the apostles exulted: "Nevertheless," said the former, "I am continually with thee; Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and receive me to glory; God is my portion for ever." "Our light afflictions," the latter subjoin, "which are but for a moment, even *work* for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." Ps. lxxiii. 23—28. 2 Cor. iv. 8—18.

#### V.—THE PROSPERITY OF THE WICKED.

As the difficulty on this head, though apparently very perplexing, is nearly allied to the last, a few remarks may suffice for solution.

In the accomplishment of such a plan, as we have shown to be worthy of God in the estimate of reason, and actually unfolded by Scripture, the wicked must be spared for various purposes in which they may be made personally subservient to the divine glory, and also for the sake of those of their posterity who are destined to be the subjects of moral restoration. It is only among the wicked, or in the state of men prior to conversion, that moral evil can display its domination, or exhibit the various forms in which God intends it should be vanquished, whether by judgment or mercy. Only this description of persons, also, can furnish the proper instruments for executing certain purposes, which would neither comport with the dignity, nor befit the spiritual character of the righteous. They are, according to Scripture, "the rod, the saw, the axe," in the hand of the Almighty.

If spared on these grounds, they must enjoy their share of that species of happiness which belongs to the system of forbearance. "But why should they prosper in the earth? Why should they, for the most part, possess the largest share of temporal substance?" The reason is not, that the Lord hath forsaken the earth, far less that he approves the ways of the wicked. Much must, doubtless, be ascribed to sovereignty;

and temporal good things, like the original physical distinctions among the human race, afford a proper sphere for the manifestation of divine liberty. This, it will be granted, unlike the caprice of men, ever harmonizes with the holiness of the Deity, and is directed by his wisdom. But if such be the nature of temporal things, that they are capable of being acquired by means abhorrent to the temper of the righteous, can it be inconsistent either with the holiness or wisdom of God, not to prevent the success of such means in the hands of those who will use them? If it be so, then must he be under the necessity of ever interposing by miracles; for to supersede this, by changing the nature of the things themselves, or their relation to the means referred to, is absolutely impossible. We shall not determine whether the fact of the prosperity of the wicked may not also be accounted for on the principle of God's displaying his benignity, by gratifying his creatures with the only pleasures they can relish. The language of Scripture seems to be emphatic, "they have their *portion* in this life;" they have "*their* good things." But the reason assigned is—not that God would gratify them as if he had originally made peculiar provision for wicked beings, which is disproved by the common nature of the good things in question, but that he "by this goodness would lead them to repentance," which surely is sufficiently agreeable to his nature. If he elevate them to wealth or power, by a visibly favourable ordering of events, it is, according to Scripture, either to fit them for the work they have to accomplish in executing his plan, or to reward them appropriately for services done. Then, the reward is such as can in no respect imply an approbation of their motives or manner, for temporal things are not the highest species of good; on the contrary, they are capable of being blasted with a curse. The affluence of the wicked is always designed to be, and is often actually made, useful to the saints, whose religious excellence, and all the satisfactions connected with it, might have been impaired by possessing that affluence themselves. Like Judas among the disciples, the bad in human society may be made stewards for the good, who are occupied with matters of superior importance. Like Judas, indeed, they may often embezzle their trust; but for this the Deity cannot be blamed. The treasures may expose them to temptation; but it is their will to have them, and the covetous deflection of their will from the divine law could not be prevented without miraculous agency, as long as their moral state continues unchanged.

The true question, however, must be, have the wicked in-



deed the largest share of genuine happiness, or the means of it? Unless this can be proved, the EQUITY of God will remain unimpeached. But reason requires us to regard worldly prosperity only as means directed to some ulterior end. It reminds us farther, that when an intelligent being like man intervenes, the case will be different from those in which an inseparable connexion subsists between cause and effect; the means may be possessed, and yet the end, whether near or remote, be totally lost. It disclaims the idea that such prosperity can be considered as the last boon of the All-sufficient, the best medium of enjoying the Deity, or itself the highest species of felicity to which the human soul is adapted. Then, observation and experience shew how frequently temporal prosperity fails to impart the happiness apparently most within its range; how easily the worst species of misery may be combined with the greatest affluence, or even with the highest literary honours, though these seldom decorate the grossly immoral; how necessary some other resources are for sustaining the spirit under the sufferings which arise from the loss of health or of worldly prosperity,—a loss by which the sufferer is bereaved of the only solace his portion can furnish.—The verdict of Scripture may be given in the words of David, “O ye sons of men, how long will ye love vanity? Many there be that say, who will shew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness into my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine abounded.” Annex to this, the ever-memorable question of our Saviour, “What is a man profited though he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?” Ps. iv. xvii. 14, 15. Matth. xvi. 26.

While the Equity of God stands clear, may not his WISDOM and BENIGNITY be seen in the various ways by which this department of his plan—the prosperity of the wicked—is made subservient to the general good? Most worthy of him will it be, if it be admirably calculated to correct the views of mankind, and prevent mistakes about temporal blessings, which are ever apt to engross their attention, and even assume the imposing appearance of the chief good. Most worthy, if it tend to force upon the mind, certain fundamental truths requisite to all order and government,—the reality especially of a future state; and if it farther minister to the interests of religion, by disclosing the estimate of the Deity, showing how little he values those benefactions which he so liberally confers on the worthless, and thus directing the



attention of mankind to better things,—pearls that will never be cast to the swine. The prosperity of the wicked, instead of obscuring, serves to demonstrate the existence of a special Providence, rendering it conspicuous in three important cases; first, in the singular preservation of *order*, while the wicked seem to be so much encouraged, and have really so much in their power,—so much to employ against the virtuous, or to consume in the gratification of their own lusts;—next, in the not less singular preservation of *religion* in the world, while it is, for the most part, attended with worldly disadvantages, and seems not to be visibly favoured by heaven;—finally, in the perpetuation, defence, and extension of the *church*, while the ungodly have possessed the means of deforming its sacred institutions by worldly magnificence, or of warring against the worthiest of its members, and otherwise opposing it in various forms, nay have often been allowed to prosper in the very opposition they have managed against it.

The grand solution, however, must be sought, with Asaph again, in “the sanctuary of God.” Thither we are directed even by reason, which suggests the absolute necessity of future retribution. Thither he was led by the Spirit, and he found that reason was not mistaken. “Then,” says he, after he had long revolved the subject without feeling such relief as might give rest to his soul, “Then I understood *their end*. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction. As a dream when one awaketh, so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image,”—their shade in the future world, or all the pomp of their empty pageantry in this;—when thou shalt terminate as a dream the show of the present system of things, then thou wilt consign to contempt the idol of their worship, the former illusory appearance of favour in the power, honours, or wealth conferred upon them. That image they themselves will despise, when, on awaking in the world of realities, they find it had only deceived them through life, and is now gone, vanished without leaving a trace behind, except in their tortured recollection of its former existence. Of the unprincipled man “who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day,” we are told “that in hell he lifted up his eyes,” and was there reminded that “his good things” had all been enjoyed in his “lifetime.” Were the prosperity of the wicked always to exist with them, were it co-extensive with their being, or did it belong to a permanent system of things, some plausible argument might seem to lie against the equity, wisdom and goodness of the Deity;

but it gives place to another state, where even the apparent obscuration of its glory by its present existence will find the proper compensation. Ps. lxxiii. 12—20; xcii. 5—9. Luke xvi. 19—31.

#### VI.—INEQUALITY OF PUNISHMENT AND REWARD.

It ought not to be supposed that this is the very same with the prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous. An atheist may be inclined to class them together, but we have a right to mark the distinction and give the appropriate solutions. The prosperity of the wicked is not *remunerative*, for the atheist cannot prove that it has any relation to their moral character, whatever occasional respect it may have to their services; neither are the afflictions of the righteous *penal*. We will grant, however, that both the one and the other, or in general the scheme of dispensation under which they fall, interferes to a great extent with that equal distribution of reward and punishment, which might have been expected in the due application of the terms to the respective classes,—punishment to the wicked,—approbatory reward to the righteous. But in so far as this is the case, our previous solutions sufficiently account for the facts.

Much intricacy must necessarily belong to the government of a world of sinful creatures, under a system of forbearance, not exclusive of penal inflictions, but at the same time subservient to some great purpose of a higher and most merciful order. Would it be deemed presumption in the common people, who are not initiated into the secrets of an earthly cabinet, to condemn the measures pursued by the executive power as foolish or unjust, merely on the ground of appearances? and ought we who know not often the relation of one event to another, much less the relations of all to the plan of Deity,—ought we, especially without taking into view such parts of that plan as may have been disclosed by special communication, to sit in judgment on the ways of providence, and boldly censure or condemn, perhaps take occasion from what we do not understand to deny altogether that any such thing as a providence exists? Let us suppose, for an example, that the poor are oppressed, and God intends to relieve them; if he shall resort to such judgments as might reach and overthrow their oppressors, either anarchy must prevail, or some public calamity fall upon the country; and are not the poor likely in either case to be involved in greater sufferings? Shall he, then,

give fruitful seasons and crown successive years with his goodness? though the largest share of the benefit, distributively considered, may find its way to the poor, it will first descend upon the already opulent oppressors, and in various ways redound to their advantage; would it be fair to conclude, that by this prosperity God was rewarding them for oppression? or even to suppose that the crime was overlooked as a thing of small moment, or of no consequence whatever, in his estimation?

The principal difficulties under this head of unequal distribution, are, the frequent escape of criminals, the long delay of public or national retributions, and the very solution which the Scriptures give of the last,—the idea of God's visiting the iniquities of fathers upon their children. All proper ground of objection, however, must vanish, if it shall appear that civil institutions and temporal judgments, even with all the irregularity alleged, sufficiently answer the purpose of control, in a state of forbearance,—that the failures of the former and the frequent long suspension of the latter, are closely connected with the execution of the great purpose to which the state of forbearance is subservient, and that God has means of vindicating himself either in this or another state by personal retributions.

1. Civil government is evidently an excellent measure for suppressing “the superfluity of naughtiness,” and therefore, with this view, but no higher, worthy of a place in the plan of divine administration. It is accordingly styled in Scripture “an ordinance of God;” and though not directly instituted by him, it seems in fact to have derived its origin from a certain notice of his will, which could not possibly be interpreted into a sanction of personal revenge: “Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.” (Gen. ix. 6.) By this species of government, human wisdom, vigilance, justice and power, were all to be enlisted on the side of the Deity, and made to contribute in their place to his present form of conducting the triumph over moral evil. But is it not evident from the nature of the means, that criminals will not always be detected, and that even when detected, they must frequently escape, owing to the want of such proof of their crimes as might be legally sustained? and is it not better that many criminals should escape, by a rigid adherence to legal provisions, than that one innocent person should suffer? Shall we conclude, however, that the object is defeated? No: for notwithstanding its unavoidable defects, this mode of control may answer all its end in the divine economy, so long as the constituted authorities

do honour to their functions ; and if, by the prevalence of moral evil, “ the foundations of the earth ” shall themselves be displaced, God has a most effectual scheme for re-establishing the fabric,—in the reign of Messiah. To evince the necessity of resorting to this, it may be proper to permit some previous derangement, favourable of course to human crimes ; and unless that necessity were evinced, how greatly might the glory of the Deity be obscured ! “ the gods,” who are only “ the children of the Highest,” might be deemed sufficient of themselves for the mighty work of “ bearing up the pillars of the world,”—a system of human invention might seem to be adequate to all the purposes of comfortable existence, and thus the idea of supreme control be lost in the efficacy of merely subordinate means ; or should this not be the case, still the control of God, absolutely considered, that is, without relation to a Mediator and some ulterior gracious purpose, would seem to befriend the human race, and to provide for their happiness, contrary to its real character and necessary tendency.

2. As the Deity, in establishing a system of forbearance, had a grand purpose in view, the moral restoration of millions, place must be given for the accomplishment of that purpose, and this is plainly incompatible with the personal and ever speedy execution of judgment on flagrant transgressors. The triumph of grace, which is most conspicuous and illustrious in the conversion of such transgressors, would be entirely precluded ; their posterity, too, could never fall under its influence ; and either the human race would be greatly reduced, if not extirpated, or virtue and religion being wholly confined to one class, and descending among them from one generation to another, might seem to run in the blood, or be the effect of mere physical constitution. It will therefore be enough for the present vindication of the Deity, if he interpose occasionally by his judgments to testify his displeasure at the crimes which militate against the very state of forbearance itself, and if, after having rendered the prevalence of moral evil properly subservient to his grand purpose, he at one time or another before the conclusion of the present constitution of things, testify his indignation against the public systems of corruption which have arisen in the world. This we find is in fact the plan of his procedure. Crimes which militate against the very existence of a state of forbearance by tending to destroy the human race, have been stigmatized by awful signs of his wrath, as soon as they made their appearance, such as murder, in the case of Cain, on whom the Lord set a mark, and unnatural lusts, in that of the cities

of the plain, given up to the vengeance of fire. The crimes are left under the stigma once set upon them for the admonition of the world, because the Deity could not be always interposing by similar judgments to suppress them. The same view may be taken of the flood; "there were giants in the earth," lawless oppressors, the tyranny of the strong over the weak had gained the ascendancy. In general, all the great judgments of Jehovah may be said to be directed against a state of things which, if allowed to prevail, would of itself put an end to forbearance, and the benignant purposes he has in view by it. At the same time, both the mode of inflicting judgments, and the periods for which they are reserved, will be found to be admirably adjusted to these purposes in the execution of his plan of triumph. When the wicked, such as Jeroboam, many of the kings even of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar, and others, are spared, it is always for some end of conspicuous importance in that plan. And then, though the personal transgressors may escape, the crimes are not overlooked, even in regard to the vindication proper in the present state, since, according to Scripture, the judgment, sooner or later, descends on their posterity. But since this last solution of the difficulty seems itself to be very objectionable, let us inquire,

3. Into the equity of the divine procedure in visiting the iniquities of fathers on their children. In general the Scriptures are consistent, while they affirm that "all have sinned," so that the Deity is not to be viewed, in any instance, as punishing those who are entirely innocent. But it is alleged, "they are innocent of the crimes for which they suffer. The fathers have sinned, and the children bear their iniquity; the fathers have eaten the sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

Let us suppose them innocent in the sense stated, may not the *fathers* themselves be punished while they live, by either beholding or foreseeing the unhappiness of their children? If they behold it, the blessing of "seeing their children's children" is converted into a curse, since they are only preserved in life to see their sin visited upon them in the sufferings of their beloved offspring. "God layeth up iniquity for his children: he rewardeth him, and he shall know it. His eyes shall see his destruction, (perhaps in the eventual cutting off of his seed,) he shall drink of the wrath of the Almighty." Job xxi. 19, 20. Does there not seem to be a manifest reference to this in the second commandment, where God specifies "the third and fourth generation," the utmost that any individual can expect

to see, and which, if he shall live to behold, he shall still find the objects of this visitation? Let it be remembered that a parent may be punished by the death of his children (as David was), while the children themselves are saved with an everlasting salvation.\* But is not the case much the same, if the parent shall be certainly assured of the unhappiness entailed on his posterity by his sin, though he cannot live to witness it? Ham must have suffered, by hearing the curse denounced upon Canaan, and foreseeing the vast distinction to be made, in future dispensations, between his posterity and those of Shem, and even of Japheth. In all such cases, are not the means resorted to for maintaining the moral government of the Deity, the strongest that can well be conceived,—strikingly expressive of his hatred of sin, and calculated to take the most powerful hold of responsible beings? He addresses himself to the *storge* of natural affection, the love which parents bear to their children; he “shews the parents, that, according to the secret order of his judgments, he continues their rewards or punishments after their death, and holds them in submission to his laws by their dearest tie, the tie which binds them to their children.”† Does it not afford also an admirable opportunity of demonstrating his hatred of the deeds committed, even when the transgressors may themselves be the objects of his love, or may have averted the judgment by penitence, and when other considerations (such as preserving the throne in the house of David) greatly subservient to his grand purpose, may interfere? 1 Kings xi. 11, 12. Is. xxxix. 7, 8. 1 Sam. iii. 14.

But most commonly the *posterity* on whom the punishment devolves, are not innocent. They are justifying the iniquities of their fathers, by not deploring them,—by prosecuting the same or similar courses,—and thus by abusing the scope given for repentance. And although men may suppose, that when God forbears, he has taken no notice of the sins committed, or in effect forgotten them, nay, the rather on these very accounts, he will eventually shew that they have been accurately observed, that they have been accumulating, that rising up before him, in a course of aggravated obduracy under his mercies, they have been treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath. “Behold, ye are risen up in your fathers’ stead, an increase of sinful men, to augment yet the fierce anger of the Lord against Israel.” Num. xxxii. 14. Again, “Even from the days of

\* See other examples, 1 Sam. iii. 12, 13. Num. xiv. 32, 33.

† Bossuet’s Univ. Hist. vol. i. p. 2. § 4.



your fathers, ye are gone away from mine ordinances." Mal. iii. 7. The Jews of old time killed the prophets, their posterity followed in the same track, they became worse than their ancestors, they were "the murderers of the Holy and Just One." It only remained for them to reject the offer of pardon for this crime; farther their iniquity could not proceed; the cup was full, and vengeance must ensue. Like a debt descending to posterity, guilt may be greatly accumulated by successive additions, till payment must be demanded. Now if God observe the proper time of exacting this, if he do not suffer the only fit or possible opportunity of glorifying his holiness and justice to pass, and if the judgment be visibly proportioned to the previously accumulated guilt, then he does enough for his own vindication under the present constitution of things. He proceeds upon two obvious principles,—1. That nations or communities are permanent bodies, susceptible of a certain moral cast, though their members be constantly changing; 2d, That owing to the relations of communities and empires to one another, and to the different departments of his plan, human society falls under the idea of a permanent body, through which some particular kinds of guilt may descend, though the direction may be frequently changed in its progress.—Then he recognises, and makes visible by the manner of his judgments, *the unity of a cause*, or of some great concern, which he undertakes to plead,—say the cause of pure religion, or of civil and religious liberty, the infractions upon which he will trace through all their ramifications up to the proper season of vengeance. "Upon you," said our Lord to the Jews, "shall come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias." This was the blood of martyrs in a cause ever the same, though it had repeatedly changed its aspect. Take the Roman empire for another example. It was first *heathen*, and in this state debased by ambition and ferocity prior to the coming of Christ; the same spirit was displayed in the cruelties exercised on the Jews, and in the persecution of the primitive Christians; it then became *Christian* itself, but soon degenerated, under the influence of the Mystery of iniquity, into a scene of still more aggravated persecution. The prevalent species of moral evil was the same, hostility to the liberties of mankind, darkened at length into hostility to revealed religion, first in the Jewish system, and then in Christianity itself. The empire, throughout all its changes, and even when divided into ten kingdoms, is still considered as the same. Now it belonged to God's

plan, that moral evil of the species referred to should run the utmost length of its course in this empire, accomplishing in the mean time various purposes of trial, correction, attestation of the truth of Christianity, &c. ; but while this species of evil, as the fruit of human depravity, and an engine of Satan, who upheld his dominion by the extensive influence of the Roman power, had been all along opposed to the happiness of mankind and the grand purpose of moral restoration, it also belonged to the divine plan, that it should not be overlooked or forgotten, in any of the baleful and obstructive forms in which it had appeared. The Deity is, accordingly, represented as marking the oppressed state of the world, particularly within the sphere of the fourth monarchy prior to the coming of Messiah, Ps. lxxxii. ; as recording the cruelties exercised on the Jews by the Roman power, even when employed as the instrument of Messiah's vengeance, Zech. xiv. 1—3 ; as carefully observing the persecution of the primitive Christians which succeeded, Rev. ii. 10. ; as listening to the cry of the blood which even then seemed to demand the æra of retribution, but desiring “ the souls under the altar ” to rest for a season, till “ their brethren that should be killed as they were should be fulfilled,” that is, till the evil should have risen to its acmé, and developed all its malignity under the last form of antichristian persecution, Rev. vi. 11. This done, and the period defined in prophecy elapsed, he comes forth in the long accumulated vengeance to put down the Mystery of iniquity, and to terminate what is emphatically styled “ the mystery of God ” in permitting it so long to exist, Rev. x. 6, 7. Then is the wrath of the nations, the harvest and vintage of the earth, the great battle of God Almighty, “ the last plagues in which his wrath is filled up.” Rev. xi. 15, 18 ; xiv. 14—20. xvi. Babylon falls ; and by a strange form of expression, as if God had even recognised the relation of the fourth to the preceding monarchies and their origin, or had traced the evil from the first mighty tyrant, the founder of Nineveh, it is said, “ in her was found the blood of saints, and of martyrs, *and of all that were slain upon the earth.*” Rev. xviii. The triumph consists, not only in rendering the evil while it lasted subservient in its various forms to his own purposes, but in displaying at length his great abhorrence of it by a duly proportioned measure of wrath, in putting it down, and causing it to give place to the moral renovation of the world. That the relation of this triumph to religion and the grand purpose of heaven, may be evident, it is a part of the effective scheme of government intrusted to



Messiah; and is therefore represented as conducted by him, Rev. xix., and as receiving its consummation, under the present constitution of things, in the millennial state of his kingdom, Rev. xx.

4. While such are the discoveries by which the holy Scriptures would dissolve our suspicion of a deformed irregularity in the general process of divine government, the same sacred fountains of light shew us upon what basis all this temporary process is justified, and how the honours of divine equity are fully sustained even with regard to *individuals*, who must often escape the retribution of their deeds on earth, either through the insufficiency of human institutions, or the long suspension of judgments. This they do by disclosing A FUTURE STATE,—a state in which these individuals, and all mankind, shall be judged and rewarded according to the part they have acted on the stage of time. “After death, the judgment.” The wicked go “to their own place;” “in hell they lift up their eyes.” And again, “God hath appointed a day in which he shall judge the world in righteousness,” by him to whom the present effective administration is committed. In the progress of that administration he is coming,—advancing to the grand universal assize. This none can escape. Whatever be said of particular periods in the previous economy, all, without exception, must have their share in its consummation. “Behold he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him. We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.”—Then “shall ye distinguish between the righteous and the wicked; then shall ye go forth and look on the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me.”—Are they buried in the second death? “their worm dieth not;” are they consumed? “the fire” of their funeral pile “shall not be quenched.”—But then shall “the righteous shine as the sun in the firmament, and as the stars for ever and ever.” Acts xvii. 31. Matt. xxv. 31—46. Rev. xx. 11—15.

#### HOSEA xiv. 9.

“Who is wise, he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord ARE RIGHT, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.”

### SECT. III.

#### SKETCH FROM REVELATION OF THE DIVINE PURPOSE AND PLAN.

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It is reasonable to think, that besides the common purpose of manifesting the divine power, wisdom and goodness, some special object was proposed by the Deity in the formation of each world throughout all the planetary systems of the universe, and that he has thus diversified beyond all conception the displays of his glory and the forms of his government.

The particular objects contemplated in the formation of the several worlds might be indicated by the physical structure of each, by the peculiar constitution of its inhabitants as to bodily frame and intellectual powers, or by other singularities of which we can form no idea. But it is surely not unreasonable to suppose, that, among all the diversity of objects, there might be at least one, so peculiar, so supernatural, intentionally so much beyond the sphere of other disclosures of the divine glory and government, that it could neither be known nor fitly accomplished in all its extent, without an immediate revelation from the Deity. Now, that this is the case with regard to our world and the discriminative purpose for which it was originally intended, both the strange aspect of things, and the existence of an explanatory revelation supported by appropriate evidence, sufficiently attest.

The Holy Scriptures give no information concerning the special purposes of other parts of the universe. They only affirm that there is one God, the author of every thing that exists beside himself; that for his pleasure all things are and were created; and that, both as the First Cause and the Last End, he is glorified by all his works. It was to be expected, indeed, that the Scriptures would treat specially of our own world, and be occupied with those subjects the supernatural character of which had rendered revelation necessary. They

profess to disclose so much of the purpose of God and the plan of its execution, as may be profitable to us in the present very limited state of our faculties.

The following sketch is presented to the sceptic, without reference at first hand to its sacred original, simply as showing him the possibility of reconciling facts and appearances in the present constitution of things, with the existence and government of a Deity, apprising him at the same time of the difficulties which may be expected to occur in the singular arrangements of such a constitution, and the complicated relations of its several parts, or of the several events which each part either presupposes or requires. The Christian will regard it as of higher authority and greater utility. The former may perceive from it that both the purpose and the plan are sufficiently worthy of a God, that they are even such as no being but a God could either devise or superintend. The latter, already convinced of the existence of a God, may find in the expansion of his views still more stable rest to his soul.

In the sketch we merely collect and arrange the views which have been rising before us, as agreeable to reason and sanctioned by Scripture, in the preceding solution of difficulties; and to this arranged outline we appeal finally, as the true *Fons Solutionum* with regard to all difficulties, however impracticable it may be to show its application to every particular occurrence.

#### GRAND PURPOSE.

Among all the diversity of possible designs, our world seems to have been either formed, or selected, for being the scene of *A Triumph over Moral Evil*.

Such a triumph might consist, not only in showing that moral evil or sin may be permitted to display itself among rational beings, without implicating the Deity, but especially,—*First*, in evincing the superiority of the divine government to that species of evil, though allowed to operate and display its malignity in every possible form, during a long period of forbearance;—*Secondly*, in inflicting such punishment as might demonstrate the divine opposition to moral evil, or glorify the justice and holiness of the Deity, either on the guilty themselves, both during the period of forbearance and at its conclusion, or on one substituted in their stead, whose character should render the demonstration as complete as it is possible to conceive;—*Thirdly*, in rescuing a vast multitude entirely from the power of moral evil, even after it had established its domi-

nion over them, freeing them eventually from every vestige of a fallen state, and exalting them to higher honours and felicity than could have been otherwise attained. In these subjects of redemption would be exemplified complete victory over sin and death, and him that hath the power of death, that is the devil. And in all the ways we have mentioned, would the very existence and prevalence of moral evil be rendered subservient to a manifestation of the glories of the Deity, for which obviously no place could have been found in the works of Nature, or any ordinary course of Providence.

Now, what we have supposed as sufficient to constitute a triumph over moral evil, is pressed upon our minds by the whole tenor of Scripture as the actually intended form of divine manifestation in our world. This, we apprehend, will be admitted by every candid inquirer.\* The purpose is revealed to us chiefly in the details of its appropriate plan of execution. But these present the following things, as constituting the peculiar or discriminative form of divine manifestation in our world ; and they are obviously things for which such a purpose alone could provide, but at the same time all-worthy of God, and sufficient to justify both the purpose, and all that has been done, or may yet be done, in the execution of its appropriate plan.

1. A new and most effective illustration of the Moral Attributes of God, by the existence of their opposite, Moral Evil or sin,—the contrast with which, at once renders them more definite, under the ideas of holiness, justice, goodness, truth, &c., and places their excellence in a most forcible light before the minds of all the rational beings to whom the illustration either already is, or may yet be made known.

2. An impressive demonstration of the awful Majesty of God, the sanctity of his legislative authority, and the inconceivable respect he has to his own nature and rights, by the

\* There has, indeed, been a controversy with regard to two schemes known to theologians by the names of supralapsarianism and sublapsarianism. But if each scheme had been properly stated and temperately considered, the one might have been found to be nowise inconsistent with the other. By opposing the latter to the former, we greatly embarrass the solution of the difficulty regarding the permission of sin, and most disadvantageously limit our view of the divine purpose in other respects. If the author be deemed supralapsarian, in connecting salvation with a triumph over moral evil as the original purpose of the Deity, to which the covenant of works was subordinate, he is at the same time sublapsarian in the proper application of the term, since he regards the covenant of grace, strictly taken, as founded on the presupposed breach of the covenant of works, and therefore posterior in the order of nature or of just conception, though confessedly prior in existence.

various forms in which sin is punished,—whether by inflicting the penalty on a substitute capable of making complete satisfaction, or by sacrificing the temporal and eternal happiness of the offenders themselves, and even subjecting the rest of the creation to vanity and bondage on their account.

3. Satisfactory evidence that rational beings are accountable to God their Creator, though not formed in a state of maturity: For this evidence provision was made in the preparatory constitution, that transaction in which the first pair were assumed as the representatives of their posterity. Both by the fact of such a transaction, and by the consequences of its violation, the responsibility of the human race even in infancy, before their faculties are so unfolded that they can act for themselves, nay, from the first moment of conception, is fully ascertained. The evidence appears in the sufferings and death of infants, in the concern required to be shown about their salvation, in the bearing of the institution of baptism on their fallen condition, and in other indications of their relation to the law, their susceptibility of guilt, and their subjection to punishment.

4. Proof of the tendency of sin to ruin its subjects irretrievably,—the very domination of moral evil, which renders the case hopeless as to all their efforts, being a part of the curse to which they are judicially consigned.

5. Proof of the power of God to devise and execute, what might of course have appeared to be absolutely impracticable,—a release from that domination, and a moral regeneration of the lapsed.

6. Decisive evidence of his Absolute Liberty, in choosing the subjects of this restoration, by fixing on such as he pleased of the human race, and leaving fallen angels to their doom.

7. A display of his benignity and power in establishing a more direct, interesting, and effective mode of communication with his creatures, than the Works of Nature,—by giving a revelation from heaven, and through the medium of this revelation, and the ordinances sanctioned by it, maintaining a supernatural intercourse with them.

8. Additional and most satisfactory evidence, in miracles and prophecy, both of his Being, and of his Supreme control over the laws of nature and the actions of free-agents.

9. A full disclosure of the Trinity of Persons in the One Godhead, by a peculiar and wonderful economy, which clearly ascertains their distinct subsistence, the order of their operation, and the personal properties of each,—for such is the eco-

mony of the plan for executing the great Purpose in Redemption. There, without derogating from their permanent equality, the order founded in their high and mysterious relations to one another is followed, and a distinct province is assumed by each, corresponding to the several objects embraced in this department of the Purpose.

10. A singular glorification of these Persons by one another, in consequence of the economical characters assumed, and at the same time a new sphere opened for each, in his own peculiar place, displaying the common perfections of Deity. The Son glorifies the Father in accomplishing the work given him to do. The Father glorifies the Son, in conferring upon him as the Mediator all power in heaven and earth, and in sanctioning all his official administration. The Spirit too is said to glorify the Son by taking of the things that are his, and showing them to men; while by this, whether it refers to revelation or spiritual illumination, he is himself glorified as that Spirit who “searcheth all things, yea, and the deep things of God.”

11. A peculiar connexion of the Deity with his Works, by the incarnation of one divine Person, and by the mystic inhabitation of another in those who are redeemed,—both of these surpassing any connexion which naturally exists, or is otherwise possible, as far as we can conceive.

12. A varied and most illustrious display of the Divine Perfections in their full compass and harmony, for which neither the works of nature nor the government of innocent beings could furnish a fit opportunity, we may add, not even the government of fallen beings, supposing the existence of sin without a scheme of recovery.

13. A vast sphere for Divine Operation in many and exceedingly diversified forms, for which there had otherwise been no place,—in controlling, for example, the evil passions and corrupt propensities of the fallen,—in upholding the pillars of society, and steadily prosecuting the predetermined course of events, amidst all the disorder, real or apparent, which sin has occasioned,—in superintending and directing to the proper ends a system of things obviously far more complicated than that of nature,—in rendering physical evil, contrary to its original character and natural tendency, subservient to good,—in producing moral restoration,—in gradually effecting a restitution of all things from their present unnatural state occasioned by moral derangement,—in “creating a new heavens and earth.”

14. A new sphere also, for the demonstration of religious

principle in a variety of ways: eminently glorifying to God, which otherwise could have had no place,—as in the faith of the gospel and all that it implies,—in contrition and contending against sin,—in resisting temptations,—in acting a worthy part as members of the church,—in patiently enduring afflictions, &c.

Lastly, such a demonstration of the value of happiness, both by its loss and by the method of its recovery, as evinces the truth and extent of the divine benignity in bestowing it, and cannot fail to augment the gratitude and praise of all who enjoy it,—not of the redeemed only, but of angels too, and it may be of all other good and holy beings throughout the universe.

If such would be the results of the purpose we have stated when contemplated by reason, and if, according to Scripture, all these things really belong to the scheme of divine administration in our world, then we may be assured that the discriminative purpose, for the execution of which our world was selected as the scene, was a triumph over moral evil in all the forms in which such a triumph can be accomplished, and that this purpose was in every respect worthy of God, as calculated to bring forward a singular manifestation of his glory. Yet it is to the plan absolutely requisite for executing such a purpose, that all the difficulties attach, which superficial thinkers are wont to allege as arguments against the Being or Providence of God.

#### THE PLAN OF EXECUTION.

This, as unfolded in Scripture, evidently consists of two departments, the one General, the other Special.

##### I. The General Department, comprises,

1. The permission of the existence and operation of Moral Evil among the creatures susceptible of it;—first, among those of the highest order, the proof of whose fallibility determines that of all others;—next, among the human race, by the violation of a peculiar federal constitution, most wisely and benignly accommodated to their state of probation, and at the same time calculated to justify the Deity in subjecting them all to the domination of sin.

2. A System of Forbearance,—to afford full scope for a demonstration of the nature and effects of Moral Evil among all the beings infected with it;—this system of procedure, to be



extended to the first order of fallen beings only so far as regards allowed activity in warfare against the Most High, and their acting as executioners of divine wrath on those deluded by them ; but among the second order of fallen beings, to be subservient to the special department of the plan, at once providing for the salvation of a vast multitude, and for other objects pertaining to the intended triumph.

3. The existence and infliction of Physical Evil in all its diversity of forms,—both during the period of Forbearance, for the purpose of proving the permanency of the divine government,—and after the close of that period, for the purpose of full vindication, in the eternal punishment of all incorrigible beings.

4. A glorious Scheme of Recovery and Restitution,—to be accomplished according to what we have denominated,

## II. The Special Department of the Plan.

The designed Triumph over Moral Evil and all its effects in obscuring the glory of God, was to be effected by a fit Person, primarily appointed to save, or deliver entirely from this species of evil and all its consequences a vast multitude of the human race,—but also, and even in order to this, invested with powers of general administration, sufficient for effecting the proper restitution of all things.

This part of the plan, therefore, comprehends the arrangements on both these heads, all that relates to Salvation, and to the process and results of General Administration.

SALVATION holds the primary place, as in it the Triumph of the Deity is most completely exemplified.

It consists in liberation, 1st, from guilt by pardon ; 2d, from the domination, or what the Scriptures denominate “ the reign ” of sin, by moral regeneration ; 3d, from the very existence of sin, at death ; and 4th, from all the consequences, signs or memorials of it, in a blessed resurrection and a state of full and final glorification.

As a deliverance from guilt, it depends, in the divine plan, on a true and proper atonement for sin ; in all the other respects it is effected by the operation of supernatural influence on the subjects themselves.

In order to Atonement, and the establishment in general of worthy grounds of Salvation, the incarnation, obedience, and sufferings of a divine Person were requisite. The Son, the



ultimate restitution of all things, the divine administration may be contemplated in two distinct economies, the one prior, and the other posterior, to the exaltation of Christ.

1st, During the prior economy, the strictly mediatorial administration seems to have been limited to the church, or those who possessed and retained divine revelation. Among them it was directed to the accomplishment of the gracious objects proposed in the great purpose of God. But it was so exercised as not to preclude such apostasies, in the total dereliction of divine revelation, as might strikingly evince the power and tendencies and dreadful effects of moral evil, and eventually provide for a demonstration of the inefficiency of all systems of control founded on merely natural principles. Such apostasies, accordingly, did take place, 1st, among the posterity of Cain, whose seduction of the descendants of Seth at length produced a state of degeneracy, oppression, and anarchy, which could no longer be tolerated in the earth; 2d, among the descendants of Noah, in their revolt to those systems of idolatry and tyranny which eventually became characteristic of the Gentiles; we may add, 3d, even among the Jews, the very people selected for preserving the true religion in the earth, who though they did not altogether relinquish revelation, or suffer it and all the ordinances founded upon it to perish, yet often learned the way of the heathen, deserting for the time the religion of their fathers, as well as corrupting its institutions on other occasions.

All in the scenes of total apostasy, wherever revelation was relinquished and lost, fell necessarily under the government of God absolutely considered, that is, as acting without the intervention of the appointed mediator. In these, accordingly, the demonstration went on and was fully brought out, of the inefficiency of every system of control or amendment founded merely on natural principles. Human legislation, civil government, the efforts of reason in philosophy, and divine judgments, though they served to restrain wickedness and prevent the bonds of society from being completely dissolved, were all proved to be wholly ineffective for reclaiming mankind, or vanquishing the power of moral evil in the heart, and overthrowing its reign in the world. It infected all institutions; it corrupted the very tribunals of justice.—The frequent apostasies of the Jews served farther to shew, that a splendid ceremonial, and the richest temporal benefactions, such as the land of Canaan, the possession of which, with an extraordinary blessing, was suspended on adherence to their system, would, of themselves,

be as ineffective, nay, that even awful displays of the majesty of God, such as pervaded the Mosaic economy, though subservient to the scheme of recovery, were not the appropriate means of its accomplishment. Even the sacred government among that people had been perverted, and in righteous judgment its glory had been eclipsed before its powers were withdrawn. As far as regarded the temporal dominion, which alone could be abused, it was destined to vanish away. Among the Gentiles the feeble control of small states gave place to the energy of kingdoms, and kingdoms were succeeded by great monarchies,—vast engines of judgment during their formation, and vast engines of secular power after they were formed,—constitutions which seemed likely to reduce the nations to order, and settle them in peace, by gathering rival states and contending kingdoms under one government, and presenting a formidable aspect to all around them. Each of these monarchies, however, was characterised by tyranny, oppression, and hostility to the true religion. None of them presented that “gathering together in one,”—or harmonising under one head, requisite for accomplishing the great purpose of heaven, and predetermined in the plan of its execution. Under all the means within the compass of the absolute government of God, though his supremacy was displayed, and subordinate ends were gained, there was no regeneration of man, no amelioration of the state of the world. Matters went on from bad to worse, till “all the foundations of the earth were gone out of course.” The crisis which demanded divine interference, or rendered it proper, at length came. The progressive deterioration permitted or occasioned by the misrule of human beings in all the forms of government which could exist on merely natural principles, had palpably shewn the necessity of a divine person officially assuming the intended corrective administration, and the call was given to him whom the Father had “sanctified and sealed” for this purpose, “Arise, O God, judge thou the earth : for thou shalt inherit all nations.” Ps. lxxxii. John x. 34—36.

All along, however, beyond the scene of Revelation, the gracious department of the purpose,—that which respected salvation and the diffusion of its appropriate means throughout the world, was kept in view ; and even the absolute government of God among the apostate nations was so conducted as to prepare for the coming and kingdom of the Saviour.—As the deluge could not purify the world, or free the very creature from the bondage of corruption, by preventing moral evil from ever regaining its ascendancy in the earth, intimation was given

that no similar judgment would be inflicted during the present constitution of things. The reason expressly assigned is, that God knew, what soon appeared to be the fact, that human depravity is incurable by such means. (Gen. viii. 21.) To prevent that depravity, however, from ever so prevailing against revelation as it had done in the antediluvian world, a new method of preserving the true religion in order to the full execution of the great purpose of Heaven was resorted to. This was the separation of the posterity of Abraham in the line of Isaac and Jacob, to be the depositaries of divine truth, and of all instituted ordinances, till Messiah should come. At the time of separation, when the Gentiles were judicially given up to their apostasy, their interest in the gracious department of the purpose was notified,—the future blessing of all nations in Christ. Agreeably to this, God, while they existed solely under his absolute government, “winked at the times of their ignorance,” almost shut his eyes to their state, never inflicting upon them such judgments as their crimes might have justified; nay, “left not himself without witness of (his intended as well as present) goodness among them, giving them rain and fruitful seasons from heaven.”—The patriarchal or family form of the church gave place to the national, and this in its turn was to be succeeded by the ecumenical or universal, in a dispensation suited to all nations. The government, during its national state among the Jews, was theocratic, and exercised by Messiah, whose deputies the kings of the house of David were, as David himself confessed him his Lord. (Ps. cx. 1.) This government he exercised not only among the Jews, but over the nations around them, defending his chosen people, giving them success against the enemies of the true religion, or employing these for their correction as circumstances required. But it was foretold, both in the Psalms and the Prophets, that when the national form of the church should give place to the universal he would assume the theocratic government, divested of every thing pertaining to its national character, to hold and exercise it directly in all its predetermined plenitude of glory and power. As the Jewish worship and government were thus ascertained to be preparatory, so we learn from the Psalms and the Prophets, that the same respect was had to his coming and reign in all the exterior arrangements of providence among the apostate nations. The changes produced by the four great monarchies were intended not only to demonstrate the necessity of his mediatorial administration, but to settle the world in the most proper state for its commencement, to foreshow the

very course of judgments by which it should be characterised, to favour the extension of his spiritual kingdom under it, and in fact, to provide one great sphere for the manifestation of his power in judging and overthrowing the various forms of opposition to the true religion,—for such a sphere was furnished by the fourth or Roman monarchy, which, instead of being removed when his administration commenced, was allowed to remain and become the scene first of pagan hostility, and then of antichristian corruption and persecution.

2d, After his exaltation, when he was “set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,” and invested with “all power in heaven and earth,” the subservient administration assumed a new aspect, and introduced a new order of things. Christ’s official right to all nations was recognised. He received authority to institute the ordinances best fitted for fully accomplishing the divine purpose with regard to salvation, and to accompany them with the requisite influence of the Holy Spirit. As given to be head over all things for the sake of the church, he received authority also to superintend and regulate all the process by which their restitution from the unnatural state into which they have been thrown by sin should be effected, and the triumph over moral evil completed.

The Scriptures ascertain the *basis*, describe the *process*, and foreshew the *result* of the general administration with which Christ is officially invested.

We find its basis, which is all along kept in view, distinctly notified in the very first oracle of mercy. This oracle, though concise and somewhat obscure, as only a text for future illustration, was admirably calculated to convey a just view of the divine purpose in all its extent. It was given, not in a promise directly addressed to man, but in the denunciation of a curse of destruction on the devil and his works. “I will put enmity between thee and the woman,” said God to the serpent, “and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”\* Here we perceive, 1st, That a triumph was intended. 2d, That it was to be gained by a previous warfare, a protracted conflict between different parties and opposing interests, which should render it the more illustrious. 3d, That the subject in whose destruction it was to consist, was that being who had not only become the seducer of the human race, but to whom the origin of sin or moral evil is ascribed, and in whose operations, on whatsoever

\* Gen. iii. 15.

ground permitted, its odious malignity is most completely exemplified. 4th, That while the triumph was to be perfected, or most illustriously displayed in salvation, deliverance from moral evil and all its effects, the subjects of this salvation, were to be human beings, not the prince and powers of darkness. 5th, That the triumph was to be aggrandised by its being gained in human nature over which Satan had prevailed,—and in this world, which he had converted into a scene of warfare against the Most High,—and through the medium of sufferings, implying, as was afterwards shown, an infliction of that very curse by which he seemed to have entailed irremediable destruction on the whole human race. Thus had God “chosen weak things to confound the mighty,” that the demonstration of divine power might be the more conspicuous, and that all the glory might redound to it. He had determined to show “the excellence of his name in all the earth,” by “perfecting praise” as if from “the mouths of babes and sucklings,” ordaining strength “because of the enemy and avenger,” by means the most unlikely for accomplishing his purpose. “What is man,” that God should put “all things under his feet!” What is weak fallen human nature, that God should make it, as assumed by the Saviour, and the only characteristic of all the saved, the medium of his triumph, presenting it in all its original perfection, and exalting it, even in consequence of the fall, to the highest honour, power, and felicity, of which a created subject is susceptible! \*

Agreeably to the terms in which the divine purpose and plan were first disclosed, we are told, “The Son of God was manifested,” or came in the flesh, “that he might destroy the works of the devil;” that “through death” he might destroy even the devil himself “who had the power of death” in regard to all its judicial infliction, or the awful extent in which it had been incurred as the penalty of sin. When the fulness of the appointed time arrived, he “was made of a woman, and made under the law,” that he might deliver from the curse of the law.† The bruising of the serpent’s head was first to be accomplished by him as “the seed of the woman,” that is, descended, according to the flesh, of Eve “the mother of all living,” and then it was to be exemplified in all those who, through the faith of the Gospel, should be interested in his victory. But it could not be accomplished by him so as to be

\* Compare Ps. viii. with the exposition, Heb. ii. 6—10.

† 1 John iii. 3. Gal. iv. 4, 5.

completely exemplified in them, except in the way of his submitting to be made a curse for them, or fully satisfying all the demands of divine justice. It was on the cross, accordingly, “he spoiled the (hostile) principalities and powers, and made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.”\* The victory was gained just by the consummation of the great sacrifice of atonement; for this it was that made void the right of Satan to retain or regard the chosen as “lawful captives”—criminals, in common with others, judicially consigned to his power as the executioner of divine wrath, without hope of release. To illustrate the destruction of the devil and his works by the sufferings of the appointed Saviour, according to the primary import of the first oracle, there had been appended to the sacrificial system, which proclaimed the *expiatory* nature of his death, the temporary ordinance of the Brazen Serpent, which as decidedly foreshewed its *victorious* character. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so was the Son of Man to be lifted up.”† If by crucifixion the overthrow of power was intended, then the crucifixion of Jesus, which was the fulfilment of the type, instead of proving his destruction, became the crucifixion of all his enemies,—of every form indeed in which moral evil opposed or withstood the purpose of salvation. When we look to the cross, we see there “the old man crucified” by the very sacrifice which expiated guilt, in order “that the body of sin and death might be destroyed in us.”‡ And, since “the strength of sin”—that which gives it its power to condemn, and in consequence of this its right to resign, “is the law,” we see also the law, as thus against us, “taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross.”§ On the same principle, we see the old serpent, who is the devil and Satan, *crucified*,—despoiled of his power to harm or eternally ruin the heirs of salvation. Thus was the Captain of Salvation “perfected through sufferings” for bringing the many sons who were given him to glory. And these are “the seed of the woman” federally represented by him, in whose persons the divine triumph shall be finally and fully exemplified, when “the God of peace, shall bruise Satan under their feet” also, and when human nature shall appear in them not only restored to its original perfection, but crowned with a glory and honour which it could never have attained by the primitive constitution of things.

\* Coloss. ii. 15.

† John iii. 14, 15.

‡ Rom. vi. 6.

§ 1 Cor. xv. 56. Col. ii. 14.

Now, just by ensuring salvation, the most illustrious display of the divine triumph over moral evil, the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, became the BASIS of an administration calculated to overthrow the visible empire of Satan in the world, and effect the intended restitution of all things. Such an administration became necessary for carrying into accomplishment the very design of his death. How should the heirs of salvation be gathered out of every land, unless God should give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession? How should the gospel of the kingdom be preached in all the world, unless the power of removing every obstruction were committed to him? How, amidst all demonstrations of human depravity, when allowed to run its full course in error, superstition, immorality, tyranny, and persecution, should the church have been preserved, extended, and elevated to her promised glory in the earth, unless all power had been given into his hand? Hence, speaking of the virtual effect of his death, he said, "Now is the judgment of this world; now the prince of this world is judged and cast out." The same event which rendered such an extensive administration necessary, rendered him worthy of receiving it, and justified its direction under him to all the other objects of the divine purpose,—even to the ultimate liberation of the creature from the bondage of corruption. His title to this honorary reward had been certified in the covenant of promise.\* And now, having overcome in our nature, and being a divine person capable of sustaining in that nature all the official power and glory comprised in the reward, he is "set down with his Father on his throne."† Because "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, God hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."‡

The PROCESS of the administration thus conferred upon him, is unfolded chiefly in the prophecies of Scripture. In the ancient prophets, (excepting Daniel,) certain condensed or general views are given, each applicable to the several periods in which the nature and design of the process is most strikingly exemplified, but at the same time calculated to conduct our

\* Isa. liii. 10, 11, 12.

† Rev. iii. 21. Heb. i. 3, 4.

‡ Phil. ii. 6—11.



thoughts to the grand consummation, of which these successive periods furnish so many pledges and preludes. The most prominent general views, are those of the coming of the Lord for judgment, the shaking of all nations, issuing in a shaking of the heavens and earth, and the creation of a new heavens and earth. The Apocalypse again, which, as its name imports, was intended to be a key to ancient prophecy, determines the particular periods in which these general predictions were to be remarkably fulfilled.

The coming of the Lord signifies any striking display of the divine power and presence for removing disorders, redressing grievances, or duly apportioning punishment and reward. Besides its application to the death of individuals, the phrase is applied to the whole tenor of the reign of Messiah, as directed to the vindication of truth, meekness, and righteousness, or the general amelioration of the state of mankind.\* But the special demonstrations of the judicial character of his reign as directed to these objects, are ascertained to be the three great comings,—for the destruction of Jerusalem,—for the subversion of Paganism in the Roman empire,—and for the overthrow of mystical Babylon. These belong to the process, and, after the destruction of the armies of Gog and Magog, terminate in his second visible appearance for final judgment, to which all the predictions ultimately conduct our thoughts, and from which the grandeur of their imagery is manifestly borrowed.

The Process is also described under the idea of a shaking or *mighty concussion*, attended with calamities, but eventually productive of ameliorating changes. The “shaking of the nations,” in the rise and succession of the four great monarchies, which was preparatory for the first coming of Messiah, passed, under the fourth monarchy, into his reign, and then assumed the more striking character of “a shaking of the heavens and the earth,”—not of the earth only, or secular state of things, but of the heavens also, the sphere of ecclesiastical affairs. And this concussion, we are told, must go on in successive shocks, till only “the things which cannot be shaken shall remain.” It terminates in a shaking of the whole present constitution of things, extending even to the material system, and finally removing whatever has obscured the divine glory, or does not suit the ulterior plans of its manifestation.†

\* Ps. xcvi. 10—13; xcvi. 7—9. Rev. i. 7.

† Hag. ii. 6, 7. Heb. xii. 25—27. 2 Pet. iii. 10.



The last general idea of the process is that of *creating a new heavens and earth*.\*—The sublime enunciation from the throne “Behold I make all things new,” respects at once the change implied in the very appointment of the mediatorial administration, and to be effected by the whole course of procedure under it. The chief of these is doubtless the moral or spiritual renovation of that multitude in whom the divine triumph shall be most completely displayed. “If any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creature,” or there has been “a new creation,” “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.”† But a more expansive view is presented in the word of prophecy, where the divine proclamation evidently refers to the changes intended both in the church and in the world. Old things,—in the previous method of preserving the truth by a separate people,—in the view given of the majesty of God as the judge of all, by the law or Mosaic system,—and in the means of foreshewing, exhibiting, and applying the promise of redemption, passed away from the church, when a more impressive view of the Deity was presented in the death of the Saviour, when the righteousness witnessed by the law and the prophets was manifested, and when the less effective dispensation was superseded by the dispensation of the Spirit. Old things with regard to God’s method of conducting his government among the Gentiles, passed also away. Neither to “the gods” directly, that is to civil rulers, nor “to angels,” who seem formerly to have held provincial governments, presiding among nations at variance with one another, (Dan. x. 13, “hath he put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.”) The direct official ruler is now the Mediator himself. To him both angels and civil rulers are subjected,—the former that they may no longer minister solely as the agents of an absolute God, but in all their occupations may have specially in view those who either are or “shall be the heirs of salvation,” and thus the merciful arrangements in the divine purpose,—the latter, that their government may be gradually ameliorated under the benign and effective influence of the reign of heaven. Old things, too, in regard to Satan’s power over the nations as holding a certain right of dominion under God absolutely considered, passed away, when Christ was authorized to subvert

\* Is. lxv. 17. 2 Pet. iii. 13. Rev. xxi. 1. The allusion in the phrase “a new heavens and earth,” to the creation of the world, seems to intimate that the Mosaic account from Gen. i. 2, refers only to the remodelling of a pre-existing system of disorganized materials.

† 2 Cor. v. 17.

that dominion in all its pre-established forms and extent. These changes in the scheme and means of administration, are described in prophecy as followed up by their proper effects, in the gradual abolition of the previous order of things so far as allowed still to exist and develop itself under the reign of Messiah, till the new heavens and earth are perfected. Then the very material system itself shall be freed from the bondage of corruption, by that fire to which the literal heavens and earth are reserved.\*

The **RESULT** of the process in these several views, is what the scriptures denominate the Restitution of all things. Already all things have been “gathered together in one,” or under one head, in being subjected to the harmonizing government of Jesus. The “times of restitution,” or of “rectification,” seem to be those periods in which the several kinds of reconciliation in the divine purpose are effected, or the disorganized and unnatural state of things introduced by sin is removed.†

And when Christ “shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power,” which either has been, or might be, opposed to the divine glory, by obscuring or preventing its full manifestation, then shall he himself “deliver up the kingdom,” terminating the present administration, and presenting the grand result to the Father, who acts in the name of Deity as the Majesty on high. And this is declared to be “the **END**,” as it shall evince the subordination of the mediatorial government itself to the divine glory, that “God may be all in all.”‡

\* 2 Pet. iii. 7.

† Acts iii. 21. Heb. ix. 10. Eph. i. 9, 10. Col. i. 20.

‡ Phil. ii. 11. 1 Cor. xv. 24-28.

THE  
CONCLUSION

THE TERMS OF THE THEME, BE A STATEMENT OF  
REFERENCES MOST NECESSARY FOR AND USEFUL TO MAN-

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Following are selected from the many which may na-  
turally occur to every reflecting mind.

phising have no sanction from reason, and are decisively condemned by the uniform ascription of every thing to God's permission or efficiency in divine revelation. Besides the baleful influence they are calculated to have on society in general, by weakening, if not destroying, the impression of human responsibility, they deprive the very contemplator of Nature of much exquisite pleasure he might otherwise enjoy, and move him from his proper place as a being formed for discerning and adoring the manifestation of the Deity in his works.

**III. That morality has a real and stable foundation.**

If there be a God, whatever is agreeable to his nature and befits the relation of a creature to him, must be not only lawful, but morally binding, or duty; and as such, it will have the legislative sanction of divine authority notified in one form or another.

**IV. That positive institutions and precepts, sanctioned by divine authority, are to be expected, and when known, ought to be religiously observed.**

If there be a God, he must intend to be worshipped by his rational creatures, for his perfection and supremacy clearly demand their homage. But, with the exception of expressing their dependence upon him, and gratitude to him, reverencing his name in oaths, and not assimilating him to the creatures, nor representing him by images, nature gives no indication of the manner or particular forms in which he may choose to be worshipped. These can be known only by special communication from himself, which is therefore to be expected, particularly in such a constitution of things as ours, since the homage to be given by fallen creatures must be regulated agreeably to their circumstances, and bear a reference to the divine plan of acceptance and moral restoration, which God alone can disclose. Such precepts and instructions, though variable, as founded not on the nature but on the will of God, ought to be religiously respected and carefully observed, so long as they are in force.

**V. That Revelation is a boon of inestimable value.**

By it we attain the clearest views of the basis and compass of morality; it alone can ascertain the forms of positive obedience; on both heads it brings the legislator and judge into view. Then, by disclosing the purposes and plans of the Deity, it enables us to surmount difficulties otherwise hope-

lessly perplexing, solaces our hearts, supplies us with sublime contemplations, and is the very means of our spiritual restoration. Let us impart this best boon of heaven to those who are destitute of it. Let us desire fervently that by it "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus" may cover the earth, and penetrate into every heart.

VI. That among the ways of God the mystery of redemption is not only most interesting to us, but also of vast comparative importance.

It holds the first, the directive place in his purpose and plan. By it he hath provided for a manifestation of his Being, Attributes, and Government, inconceivably more glorious than could have been possible by any other system, physical or moral. And in it his triumph over the only opposite of his nature is perfected.

VII. That civil government ought to be greatly respected as a most necessary and beneficial institution.

Deriving its origin from an ancient notification of the divine will, (Gen. ix. 6,) holding in all ages a conspicuous place in the plan of control, and now put under the Messiah to be rendered efficient according to its true ends,—it is sanctioned as an ordinance of heaven, to be honoured and upheld by the worth and deportment both of rulers and subjects.

VIII.—That there will be a universal judgment for the final settlement of all things.

If there be a God, reason instantly concludes from the present aspect of things, that there must also be a future state; and the Scriptures direct us to the existence of such a state as the proper solution of all difficulties respecting the present unequal distribution of rewards and punishment. But they notify farther, that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness," by him to whom the execution of his grand purpose has been committed. The propriety of this appointment will at once be acknowledged by reason. It was evidently required by the same justice which demands a resurrection of the dead. The decision passed on individuals at death, though it fixes their eternal state, affects only the soul. But it is right that sinners should be punished and saints glorified in the whole of their physical frame, and that both classes should be judged as human beings, distinguished from angels by consisting of a soul and a body. The measure

of the iniquity of fallen spirits, in the concern they have with human wickedness, cannot be filled up till the termination of the present constitution of things. At that period, when the judgment must sit upon them, it is surely proper to summon those whom they have seduced, or by whom they have operated, to appear together with them, that God may judge between both parties, and assign to each the due reward of their deeds. Besides this, the appointment of such a day was evidently proper on account of the social and relative state of mankind. Many causes to be decided by the Supreme Judge, may lie between monarchs and their subjects, or between the people of one nation and another. Though nations and civil communities will then be no more, the individual criminality, arising from mismanagement in former public relations, remains to be judged, and it is fit the parties be confronted at the judgment-seat. One generation, too, may be accessory to the evil committed by others, either as originating a criminal course, or prosecuting to its consummation one commenced ages before. Nay, the full amount of all the good or evil done by individuals may not have discovered itself till long after they are dead; and though there may be enough to determine their lot at death, yet final judgment ought to proceed upon a just estimate of the whole case, and cannot then be anticipated. When we consider farther that the decision which passes at death is unknown, and that mystery often rests on the visible circumstances of the death both of the righteous and the wicked, the appointment of such a day will appear to be proper for the full vindication of the Deity. The whole plan of divine operations, accordingly, and particularly the administration of Messiah, as revealed in Scripture, naturally tends to such a day of God. The Most High will put the finishing hand to the present constitution of things, in a manner worthy of all that went before, and of all that shall follow.

IX. That the Sabbath has a moral foundation, on account of which it ought to be reverentially kept.

The importance of a due observance of the Sabbath to the interests of society, and its vast utility in preparing rational and accountable beings for appearing before the judgment-seat of Christ, are sufficiently obvious. Its moral basis is thus established.

If there be a God, it must be essential to his nature, that *the whole of his existence* be occupied in doing honour to himself, and enjoying happiness by the contemplation of his own

## CONCLUSION.

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glorious perfections, either as with himself, or as manifested in his works. The full display of his perfections in any work, that is, so far as the work can admit, supposes it to come under the idea of a finished work,—actually executed and perfect. With regard to works, therefore, the Sabbatism of the Deity, the highest we can possibly conceive, supposes his resting from the work as finished, and denotes his resting in the manifestation of his glory by it, including the ideas of contemplation and complacency.

Now, since what is essential to the divine nature is the basis of morality to the creature, it must be morally incumbent on rational beings, as far as is practicable, to devote *the whole of their existence* to the contemplation of the Deity, as manifested by his works, and to a complacential resting in the discovery, accompanied with the expression of such homage as befits them according to their relation to the Deity, and concern in his works. This may be called the Sabbatism of the creature; and it consists in entering into God's rest.

If the rational creature be a spirit disconnected with matter, or if it exist in a spiritual body, superseding all care about animal life,—then the *entire duration* of its being may be devoted to such a Sabbatism.

If it be a creature of animal life, this will not be practicable. Such was man originally, such he still is. Therefore God, without granting any release from the proper frame of mind on other occasions, was pleased to sanctify *such part of our time*, as seemed to his wisdom neither too much nor too little, and to devote this to the express purposes of contemplation and homage. "The Sabbath was made for man," or in accommodation to our circumstances.

As the works of creation were to be the first medium of divine manifestation to human beings, God indicated the relation of the Sabbath to these, by occupying six days in arranging our world, and sanctifying the seventh, the day on which he rested from his work, and pronounced it good.

The seventh was originally the last day of the week, and this though a new order of things was introduced by the fall, God allowed to continue to be the Sabbath during all the period the Old Testament, because, till the coming of Messiah, creation was the only great *finished work* in which he could rest the very law and Mosaic system, testifying that as yet his glorious rest was not actually established. But after Jesus finished the work of divine glorification, which founded the order of things, and secured its completion, the first day

week,—the day on which he entered into his rest, and on which God proclaimed his rest in the accomplishment of redemption,—was set apart to be the Christian Sabbath.

As the seventh day in recurrence, it is still related to creation, and calculated to remind us of the glory of God in the works of nature. As no longer the last, but the first day of the week, it is more closely connected with the New Creation, and all that belongs to this work. But in both views it is the pledge of that celestial Sabbatism to be enjoyed hereafter, when, our present mode of existence being changed, the whole duration of our being may be occupied in resting with God, contemplating *all his works*, celebrating and rejoicing in his glory as displayed in the universe, but especially in the new heavens and earth, the grand result of his peculiar purpose and plan.

X. That a devout and submissive temper becomes us in the mean time, with regard to all that seems strange or mysterious in the ways of the Deity.

An awful commission was given to the prophet Isaiah, relating to the manner in which all the prophets, and our Saviour himself, would be treated by the great body of the Jews, nay to the conduct of thousands even under the last and most effective economy, “Go tell this people, hear ye indeed, but understand not : Make the heart of this people fat, and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes ; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert and be healed.” But previous to his receiving this strange mandate, which involves the permission not only of sin, but of judicial obduracy, and thus both the temporal and eternal perdition of thousands,—the views of superior Beings are disclosed, and the song of the seraphim proclaiming the divine equity in such dispensations, is heard ; they veiled their faces with their wings, and said, “Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory.” Is. vi.

The same remarkable prelude introduces the grand prophetic view of our Lord’s administration, under which, contrary to what might have been expected, there were to be convulsions of nations, and many and severe persecutions of the faithful ; while a mystery of iniquity was to arise and prevail for a long period in the earth, longer than the very triumph of religion in the millennial age. During all this, however, the living creatures, who represent the ministry of the church, the directors of her worship, continue the song which precedes its com-



mencement, "They rest not day and night, saying, holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come."

So let us believe and adore when we cannot understand ; fully persuaded that all the ways of the Deity are worthy of himself, and ever disposed to conclude even our most enlarged and pleasing contemplations with the reverential acknowledgment : "Lo ! these are part of his ways ; and how small a portion is known of him !"

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THE  
**ANALOGY OF RELIGION,**  
NATURAL AND REVEALED,  
TO THE  
CONSTITUTION AND COURSE OF NATURE.

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TO WHICH ARE ADDED,  
**TWO BRIEF DISSERTATIONS :**

- I. OF PERSONAL IDENTITY.  
II. OF THE NATURE OF VIRTUE.

BY  
**JOSEPH BUTLER, LL.D.**  

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**LATE LORD BISHOP OF DUBHAM.**

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*“Ejus (Analogiæ) hæc vis est, ut id quod dubium est, ad aliquid simile  
de quo non queritur, referat ; ut incerta certis probet.”*  
QUINT. INST. ORAT. L. I. c. vi.

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**1834.**

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- ✓ 1. Religion, Natural
  - ✓ 2. Apologetics, Christian
  - ✓ 3. Personality
  - ✓ 4. Virtue

# INTRODUCTORY ESSAY,

BY THE

REV. GEORGE SCOTT.

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"ALL things are double, one against another, and God has made nothing imperfect." It is upon this principle that the reasoning of the Analogy of Religion, natural and revealed, is conducted by Butler. The principle is founded upon the observed and established fact that there is a correspondence, and resemblance, and adaptation between all the works of God, and therefore, that there is strong presumption that they will throw light upon each other, in regard to their origin, and present mutual relations, and final design. Now, it is evident, that every process of reasoning which proceeds from resemblance of circumstances, or simple, moral, or natural verisimilitude, can lead only to probable conclusions; the process cannot lead to unerring certainty, or demonstrative proof. But if these analogical resemblances are found to be so numerous, and extended, and almost universal, as to force upon us the moral and nearly certain conviction that they were designed and contrived to form part of one unique system, and neutralized only by some difficulties, which we cannot fully explain, and the reasons of which we cannot yet comprehend, the probability must be very strong, amounting to a moral certainty, that all proceeds from one author, and all bears upon one end. The object therefore aimed at, or to be attained by analogical reasoning, is not demonstrable or mathematical certainty, but that kind of moral conviction which all men must proceed upon in the ordinary business and pursuits of life. That spirit of scepticism which would induce a man to hesitate, or refrain from acting till he saw with perfect certainty the whole relations and *the most distinct consequences* of the object of his deliberation, or that would withhold him from giving the assent of his understanding, and the consent of his heart to any doctrine, till he saw the exact position which it should hold in a system of universal truth, is altogether unfit for beings of such a moral and intellectual nature as man,

placed in a world of a moral constitution such as ours. It is universally felt and acknowledged that there must be some principles of conduct, which need and can admit of no proof, but are clear and unquestioned as first truths. Now assuming a certain number of these, or proceeding upon them as the universally acknowledged facts and truths by which man feels himself bound to regulate his conduct, it is the object of Butler to extend them upward in their application to the doctrines of natural and revealed religion, with the design of refuting the objections of the sceptic, and satisfying the doubts and difficulties of the weak believer. Analogy, then, is evidently not the demonstrative form of reasoning; and however numerous the instances may be of its extension from the course and constitution of nature, as exhibited in the actual and observed government of the world to religion, we do not, by any means, say that a counter-evidence of demonstrative certainty would not overthrow it. But clearly, till such evidence can be alleged, it will hold good and valid as far as it goes. For instance, to take a case from natural history, we cannot say that such a thing as spontaneous generation, either in the animal or vegetable kingdom, is altogether impossible and absurd, or that there may not be powers in the immensity of nature's riches capable of producing such effects; but till those powers are detected, and exhibited, and traced, we can say that all the analogies of nature's processes, to an almost limitless extent fully traceable and manifest, are against the supposition. We observe nature working in a certain way, in innumerable instances, where her processes are visible, and we have reason thence to conclude, that when these are visible only in the result, the same general or universally observable rule has been followed.

These remarks may serve to explain, to a certain extent, the nature of the argument that pervades the whole of the Analogy. It is a reasoning from things known and certain, to things which are supposed to be doubtful, or which require to be proved. Butler nowhere represents it as an argument which, of itself, is satisfactory and perfect to the extent of a demonstration. His strong mind, which seems to take the measure of the human intellect, with all its weaknesses and prejudices, and which surveyed, with a keen discerning eye, and from a lofty flight, the whole extent of the field of known truth, induces him to take his position of defence and offence as a champion in the cause of Christian truth extremely low—lower than he needed to have done, or perhaps should have done. But this humility as an arguer, this apparent diffidence of himself

in assertion, originates from no want of confidence in the fullness of proof for the Christian truth, or in the strength of his own peculiar line of original reasoning; but evidently from a polite deference to the prejudices of those sceptics "who take it for granted that Christianity is not so much a matter of inquiry; but is to be set up as a principal subject of ridicule, for having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world." His object is to arouse to consideration, and what he proposes to prove is, "that any reasonable man, who will thoroughly consider the matter, may be as much assured, as he is of his own being, that it is not so clear a case that there is nothing in Christianity." The whole of the *Analogy*, then, is designed to be an appeal to common sense and common prudence, a calm process of expostulation to an understanding which is warped by the wishes and half-formed hopes of a corrupt heart, or by the reflex influence of a vicious conduct acting upon an intellect and conscience easily biassed, and greatly modified in their operations by such sinister bias. In his day, self-styled philosophy and licentious wit had cast the semblance of their reasonings, or the bitterness of their satire, over the formal and rigid exhibition of the Christianity of the days of the Commonwealth. From the revulsion of feeling caused by the circumstances of the times, infidel writers had succeeded to a certain degree in establishing a species of floating and vague presumption, that such an austere creed was not suited for forming the religion of a gentleman, or the faith of a philosopher. The Christian advocate then had a delicate task to perform. However strong he felt in the goodness of his own cause, or in the overwhelming power and clearness of his own argument, he had still to assume the character of an apologist, that he might gain a patient hearing. We could verify the truth of the remark by an appeal to the general spirit that pervades the Christian writers of the period, which to a considerable extent influenced even the sarcastic and misanthropic mind of Swift. It seems to have been felt, that this was the most prudent and expedient mode of meeting and repelling the general set which the tide of considerably high intellect was taking against Christian truth; and we are bound to take these considerations along with us, when examining the style in which our author states and conducts his argument. This attitude of an apologist is manifest from the whole tenor of the book. In p. ii. ch. 8, he says, "I have argued upon the principles of others, not my own, and have omitted what I think true and of the utmost importance, because by others thought unintelligible or

not true." He fights the sceptic on his own ground, and with his own weapons—meets him on principles acknowledged by both; joins issue with him in the extension and generalization of the argument, in its application to the Christian system. He descends even lower than this, as in the chapter on Fatalism, considered as a practical principle, in which, assuming it true, for the sake of argument, he confounds the fatalist, and proves that his is a principle which will not work with beings such as men are, placed in such a world as this at present is.

We say it is necessary to take this into consideration, in reviewing the whole of the reasoning, because it appears plainly, that Butler designedly started with the argument very low, and did not intend to run up the analogy to the high or highest doctrines of Revelation. We do not mean to justify him in this. We state it only to show the manner in which he has thought fit to direct his appeal to the reason and conscience of those whom he wished to argue out of their apathetic indifference, or hostile prejudice. It enters into no part of his plan to give statement or proof of the doctrines of Christianity individually. He views the system as a whole, which comes recommended to our faith and our reason by certain evidences, and glancing through the extent of the world's history, and the whole of its experience, and analyzing the intellectual and moral constitution of man, he shows, that instead of there being any presumption, from the observed course of nature, against such a revelation being given to man, analogy would lead us to the contrary conclusion. In dealing with those objectors, who ground their disbelief on the mysteries or difficulties of revelation, which indeed forms great part of the book, he proceeds upon the strength of a fact that no rightly constituted mind will controvert, namely, that reason itself is very imperfect and fallible, and that unless the whole plan of the universal government of God were placed before us, with the reasons for every particular movement and dispensation of that government, we could be in no condition to decide certainly what is consistent and what inconsistent with the scheme of universal rule, which we have every reason to suppose is consistent with itself, and is tending to one general and great object. The field of argument here is inexhaustibly rich and wide; for whenever the objector opposes any doctrine of Revelation as being incomprehensible and mysterious, the advocate for Christianity has only to look over the face of nature, and the moral government of the world, and the deductions of natural reason, and he everywhere finds difficulties and mysteries which reason

in assertion, originates from no want of confidence in the fullness of proof for the Christian truth, or in the strength of his own peculiar line of original reasoning; but evidently from a polite deference to the prejudices of those sceptics "who take it for granted that Christianity is not so much a matter of inquiry; but is to be set up as a principal subject of ridicule, for having so long interrupted the pleasures of the world." His object is to arouse to consideration, and what he proposes to prove is, "that any reasonable man, who will thoroughly consider the matter, may be as much assured, as he is of his own being, that it is not so clear a case that there is nothing in Christianity." The whole of the *Analogy*, then, is designed to be an appeal to common sense and common prudence, a calm process of expostulation to an understanding which is warped by the wishes and half-formed hopes of a corrupt heart, or by the reflex influence of a vicious conduct acting upon an intellect and conscience easily biassed, and greatly modified in their operations by such sinister bias. In his day, self-styled philosophy and licentious wit had cast the semblance of their reasonings, or the bitterness of their satire, over the formal and rigid exhibition of the Christianity of the days of the Commonwealth. From the revulsion of feeling caused by the circumstances of the times, infidel writers had succeeded to a certain degree in establishing a species of floating and vague presumption, that such an austere creed was not suited for forming the religion of a gentleman, or the faith of a philosopher. The Christian advocate then had a delicate task to perform. However strong he felt in the goodness of his own cause, or in the overwhelming power and clearness of his own argument, he had still to assume the character of an apologist, that he might gain a patient hearing. We could verify the truth of the remark by an appeal to the general spirit that pervades the Christian writers of the period, which to a considerable extent influenced even the sarcastic and misanthropic mind of Swift. It seems to have been felt, that this was the most prudent and expedient mode of meeting and repelling the general set which the tide of considerably high intellect was taking against Christian truth; and we are bound to take these considerations along with us, when examining the style in which our author states and conducts his argument. This attitude of an apologist is manifest from the whole tenor of the book. In p. ii. ch. 8, he says, "I have argued upon the principles of others, not my own, and have omitted what I think true and of the utmost importance, because by others thought unintelligible or



blimed and purified by the loftiest poetry of inspired bards. Still the most perfected form of that preparatory dispensation was adapted only to a lower exercise of the powers of the human mind, as it was designed only for a narrow locality, and a limited number of people. The perfection of divine Revelation, adapted to all faculties and all ages, and to every degree of advancement in knowledge and civilization, was not given, till the ruling nations of the world were advanced to a high degree of refinement in knowledge. The fulness of time for giving this Revelation in its perfection was not come till the intellect of man was greatly developed, and the only truly intellectual people that had existed in the world had cultivated their language to a degree of unexampled and previously unconceived perfection. When Christianity was first preached to the world, the Greek was prepared to give intelligible form, and fullest expression to the doctrines of its high theology, which, we have strong presumption to believe, no other previously existing language was capable of doing with half the effect.

While then the doctrines of Revelation are in harmonious analogy with all that the history of human nature has disclosed of the strength and the weakness, of the wants and capabilities of man, and with the almost universal belief of all nations, however that belief originated, yet human reason never did, and never could anticipate one of the progressive moves of that Revelation. Every effect must have an adequate cause, and we can discover nothing in the powers and passions of men that can be an adequate cause for the discovery of such doctrines. Neither could nature alone, by all her apparent adaptations to the condition of man, have ever brought back the world to its Creator. The history of all the superstitious forms, in which religion has exhibited itself, shows plainly that the natural tendency of humanity is to corrupt and render idolatrous, and gross, and absurd, what was at first comparatively simple and pure. But when a system is given which is demonstrably adapted to all conditions of society, and fully adequate to supply all the wants of man, though human reason, in its utmost power, cannot pretend to see it in all its extent and in all its applications, yet we are fully able to trace to a great length its analogy to the "constitution and course of nature." While every other form of religion, that has amused or deceived the world, has been fitted only for one nation, or one state of society, the religion of Revelation, without any change, is fitted for all nations and all times. Its fundamental doctrines are simple to the apprehension of childhood, and unlettered

ignorance, and barbarism, its deeper theology and mysteries give beneficial and wholesome exercise, when properly studied, to the profoundest intellect, and carry upward the sublimest soarings of the most gifted imagination. Universal in its application, and expansive in its nature, as Christianity is, we are far from thinking that it has been traced in all its bearings, and applied in all its regenerating operations, on the intellectual and moral nature of man. The analogies we are easily able to trace would induce us firmly to believe that its divine treasures are yet rich in new and undiscovered adaptations to the future condition and exigences of mankind, in their onward progress, as nature is yet young and unexplored in her boundless store of unknown mysteries and virgin powers. This adaptation of the doctrines of Christianity to elevate, and purify, and perfect the loftiest and noblest principles of our nature is an internal argument for its truth which every man for himself may apply, who will sincerely conform his life to these doctrines. "If ye do his will," says the author of that revelation, "ye shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." We think, that very important advantage might have been gained to the argument, by the extension of such an analogical process as that we have merely hinted at; but where the materials for argument and illustration are so rich, the course must be one of selection and condensation.

There seems to us to be a pretty general mistake regarding the characteristics of Bishop Butler's mind, and the peculiar merits of his great work, the Analogy. Some writers of no little name delight to view him as a man of vast originality, and creative genius, and profound erudition. Judging from what he has done, we scarcely think that he is entitled to a very high rank in any one of these departments. This treatise is original, so far, as we believe no other writer before him had ever systematically encountered the opponents of the truth on the same ground. But it is a line of argument that lies at the very door; and it will be frequently found, that it is the very mode of defence followed by unlearned men of sound sense, who never heard of Butler, and who could not perhaps define the meaning of analogy. As for creative imagination, or fancy, there is less scope for it, and less exercise of it, in the mode in which Butler has wisely chosen to conduct the argument, than in almost any book of controversial reasoning or practical theology we know. And as for learning, in the strict acceptation of the word, there was not much call for it, and there is certainly no superfluous or useless display of the commodity.

But if there be no prominent or striking exhibition of any or all of these, there is much that is greatly more conducive to the object he had in view—there is a powerful and comprehensive grasp of the subject, a full and clear statement of the merits of the question, a full—an extensive knowledge of the strength, as well as the weakness of the human mind, a profound and awful veneration of the infinitude and incomprehensible nature of the divine character and government, and a resulting caution, approaching occasionally to timidity, of stepping over the surmised or conventionally defined boundaries of reason. Such seems to us to be the character of the mind that produced the works of this author. And certainly such qualities working powerfully and harmoniously together, were most appropriately adapted to meet and discomfit that self-conceited display of philosophy, and that vain boast of the sufficiency of natural reason which distinguished many of the celebrated geniuses, who, unfortunately, influenced to a great extent the public mind of his day. It was such qualities as these pervading the book, that rendered it productive of great good at the time.

In our own day, too, there is no little of the same spirit of this shallow philosophy abroad, of a still more innovating, and ambitious, and ardent kind. It may apparently assume the garb of a lowly humility, and seem to be the natural expression of the aspirations of ardent votaries, who profess to worship at the portals of the temple of eternal truth, but in reality, it is often an overweening and ill-disguised conceit of the power and sublimity of the innate and unaided faculties of man, faculties which are expected soon to shoot forth into a glorious and triumphant career of Utopian perfection. We are far from wishing to speak slightly or sarcastically of any effort to elevate and purify the intellectual and moral nature of the immortal spirit of man. He has been endowed by his Creator with boundless longings after a higher perfection, and, as far as we can see, with equally unbounded capabilities of arriving at it. We would like, however, to see more real humility and self-diffidence in the enthusiastic regenerators of the day; a greater trust, and, we will write the word, a true Christian faith in the ever-present illumination and direction of the Spirit of all truth. It is this spirit of ardent and bold innovation, the results of which we somewhat fear; and could we be the means, by this Publication, of again trimming the lamp and diffusing around the steady light of Butler's sober philosophy, and casting its influence over the general mind, it would serve to regulate at least its present elastic ardour, and keep it from rushing into the path of mani-

lest and great danger. There is another important remark we have to make, on the nature of such a controversy with scepticism and infidelity, namely, that all the objections of the unbeliever are merely exceptions to some part of religion, natural or revealed. These exceptions may be against the nature or degree of the evidence by which it is supported, or the doctrines taught, or the precepts inculcated. Some even of high name ground their unbelief, as on a satisfactory basis, upon the alleged inconsistency of the lives and conduct of those who profess it; or, seizing upon the various shapes in which it has been perverted and corrupted by the superstitious inventions of men, overlook altogether that pure form of revelation in which it came from its Author. Hume rests his scepticism upon the insufficiency, or alleged absurdity and impossibility of miraculous evidence; Paine, upon the general incredibility of the doctrines, and some imagined internal inconsistencies; and Gibbon and the French infidel school of philosophy are satisfied, that the last ground of objection mentioned is sufficient to justify them in throwing the whole aside as an invention. Though these may not be all the reasons advanced by scepticism, this glance at the nature of the objections is sufficient to show, that none of the enemies of Christianity argue against the whole as a system, nor advance their arguments in a systematic style. There is and must be assumed the pretended principles of philosophy and human reason on their side. But they assume as a postulate the sufficiency of this philosophy and reason, and while they are in almost all cases indebted for its principles and light to the heaven-kindled fire which was given to guide men through the world, they abuse it to the end of extinguishing in the breast of men the celestial flame itself. This has been the mode of warfare downward from the apostate Julian; and when the advocate for the truth of revelation would refute its opponents, he must do it in detail, as the versicoloured opinions he has to encounter have no point of union or resemblance but that of sworn hostility to the truth of Christianity. This has very often been done against all the enemies of revelation, whatever be the point on which they have endeavoured to storm the citadel of truth. But we know of none who has taken his ground of offence and defence upon such a wide and comprehensive system as Butler. It is a uniform and regular system of tactics that bears at once upon the whole line, and upon every point of imagined strength occupied by the assailants; it is a generalship that surrounds and storms the whole camp, without leaving to the enemy, in

the wide field of warfare, a single stronghold to seize upon or betake themselves to. The consequence has been, as we might have expected, that no hostile movement has since been made against the strongly guarded and impregnable entrenchments he has thrown around Christianity.

But though the strongholds of error have been thus successfully demolished, we do not by any means suppose that scepticism and infidelity are banished out of the world. The same causes exist in all their strength to produce these that ever did, and perhaps, in our own day, they are as prolific in deadly fertility as ever before. Multitudes have reason to fear the truth of religion, have cause sufficient to wish that it may be all a fiction and device of priestcraft. These wishes and fears operating upon a very pliant and accommodating conscience, upon a credulous and sophisticating understanding, induce men at last to view, what was once doubtfully advanced in palliation or excuse, as a sufficient justification of themselves, and a full refutation of those doctrines that were the cause of their alarm, that roused their yet unseared conscience, and disturbed their peace of mind.

The evil heart, according to the doctrine of Scripture, is the origin of all unbelief; the wicked life, according to the confession of Rochester, is the only argument against Christianity. We cannot assert positively, indeed, that some minds may not be so constituted, or drilled by long habit into a contented acquiescence in a system of principles, as to render them incapable of seeing the conclusiveness and fulness of the evidence of Revelation. But this I think we may very confidently assert, that a rightly constituted mind, not thoroughly perverted, when brought into reasoning contact and candid consideration of the doctrines of Christianity, and made to see all its very diversified apparatus of proof, and its innumerable adaptations to the present circumstances, and the acknowledged and felt exigencies of humanity, must feel, at the same time, that it comes accompanied with an overwhelming and irresistible power of persuasion. If the sceptic then will still doubt, and the infidel still disbelieve, it is not because God has appointed the circumstances in which man, as a moral agent, is pleased to remain in such a state of unfortunate perplexity and uncertainty, as to compel him to stand in vacillating hesitation or necessary doubtfulness. The direct contrary has been proved a thousand times to be the truth of the case. It is because men cast about to find objections, or reasons against Revelation as a system, that they may contrive to evade equally the terrors

of its denunciations and the power of its obligations, to stand aloof, in short, from the power of those evidences by which it recommends itself to reason. If our remarks should meet the eye of such individuals, we would earnestly press upon their most serious consideration this treatise of Butler, which we hold to be one of the most powerful applications of the *argumentum ad hominem*, to men of such principles, that is to be met with in any language. The very moderation and stoical calmness with which the argument is conducted, betokens any thing but indifference or apathy on the part of the apologist. He is invested with the deep seriousness and conviction of a man of powerful mind, who feels the paramount importance of his subject, and who will not weaken or neutralize the force of his reasoning, by allowing human passion or emotion to throw its colouring over the clear light of logical argument and cautious induction. If the sceptic then refuse to read the book at all, or read it with that careless indifference which is impassible of conviction, or that determined resistance against the doctrines of revelation which has already resolved not to be convinced, he must do it at his own peril. It is, however, for men in such a state of mind that Butler chiefly writes, and we should think that the most inveterate sceptic, if he can be induced to look into the argument at all, would be convinced of this at least, that it is a matter of serious duty to give a patient hearing to such an undeclamatory reasoner, and such a gentlemanly apologist, as the candid and strong-thinking author of the Analogy.

Butler has been blamed, and perhaps with some reason, for not bringing into more prominent view several of the peculiar doctrines of Revelation. For instance, the existence of moral evil, the corruption of human nature, the full doctrine of the atonement, free grace and justification by faith, and the agency of the Holy Spirit in regeneration, are either not mentioned at all, or touched upon so slightly as to form no necessary part of the argument. Now, though we do not say that he denied these, yet in a Christian treatise, where the line of reasoning did not necessarily exclude, but rather called for some decided notice of them, they should have been made to occupy some prominent place in the body of the work. Without this, it does not show what Christianity is, and though these doctrines are not found in the archives of natural reason, yet they are plainly counterparts to complete nature's deficiencies. They all hang together, and rise above each other in beautiful gradation, and form a system, which although reason could never discover, she

still sanctions, as being wonderfully adapted to the wants and weaknesses of humanity. There is, indeed, no unequivocal type or unquestioned resemblance in nature, or in the unaided deductions of human reason, to some of the facts and doctrines of revelation. Imaginative men may find multitudes of these similitudes, but, in the eye of strict argument, they are more fanciful than real. Profound learning, like Cudworth's, may bring out from the records of ancient belief many instances of a trinity of divine agency in the government of the world. The whole of heathen superstition is full of instances of the incarnation of divine persons. But whether these be the divergent rays of a primitive revelation given to man, and transmitted in many a disfigured shape to succeeding generations, or the abortions of a sickly imagination ardently longing after some solid foundation upon which to rest the unsanctioned and uncertain hopes of humanity, it seems clear to us that such an argument as that of the Analogy will come with greater force by not pushing it to such doubtful probabilities. They might, however, have been alluded to with advantage, as affording presumption of an original revelation, as containing the germs of those mysteries of a nobler theology, which human reason could not pretend to discover, but which, when revealed, are found more or less in accordance with the almost universal belief of the world.

## NOTES.

Part I. Chap. i. page 254.—The whole of the reasoning of this chapter, though cautious, proceeds nearly upon an assumption, that the mind is totally distinct from and independent of the material organization through which it at present acts; the inference being, that the soul is therefore immortal. Both Milton and Locke, however, were of opinion, that thought might be merely a quality communicated to the exquisitely organized structure of man. Dr. T. Brown, indeed, thinks that it may be impossible even for Deity to communicate to matter properties so entirely distinct from, and even contrasted with all its known properties. Even this most acute metaphysician, however, hesitates to assert, that even this being proved amounts to any thing more than a presumption that the soul does not necessarily cease to exist at death. This seems the farthest that reason can go, while so little certain is known of the real essence of the soul itself. The analogy of the great change



of condition which takes place at birth, and of the different states of existence through which various insects pass, though popular, as mere figures and illustrations, are inept and inconclusive in a strict process of inductive reasoning. If we hold the annihilation of existence in the lower animals at their death, all natural analogy, if fairly followed out, leads to a conclusion contrary to that which Butler wishes to draw. In general, when the field of argument is so rich, nothing essential would be lost by relinquishing such doubtful ground. It is enough for the purpose, that atheism and infidelity cannot prove the reverse, and upon them clearly the *onus* of the proof lies.

Part I. Chap. v. page 289.—[*Happiness.*] This of course is to be understood only as the answer of natural religion, or of unaided reason to the inquiry, “how man came to be placed in such a state of probation, and with what design?” In general terms the object of moral discipline could not have been represented in other or more appropriate words. It is necessary to be observed, however, that such general inferences from the apparent design, or obvious tendency of operation in the ordinary economy of God’s moral government, trench not at all upon the higher and peculiar doctrines of revelation that teach the way for the attainment of this piety and holiness. Much less will such reasoning entitle us to fix any available standard of merit, which man of himself can attain, or to say that such or such a degree of obedience and holiness will give us a claim, upon the principles of equity, to the reward of that happiness which we long for. Human reason has never been able to tell satisfactorily to the conscience of man how he can be “just before God.” It is allowable, however, to take Butler’s statement as only an advanced step in the argument, a reasoning on the principles of those whose assent he wishes, in the mean time, to gain, and not to set it down, in its strictness, as his professed creed of Christian morality.

Part I. Chap. v. page 299.—[*Occasional acts.*] If this be given as an account of the circumstances that led to the fall, it is scarcely correct. Man was created perfectly sinless, without the slightest imagination of evil, or propensity to transgress, which would have been sinful elements of his nature. He sinned and fell, not because there was any active power internally inducing him to rebel against the law, but because there was a *passive power* that did not render his mind completely incapable of being influenced by the intrusion of thoughts by



an external agency, which might result in sin.—See Edwards on the Freedom of the Will, part iv. sect. 10. and Williams' excellent note on that section.

Part I. Chap. v. page 303.—[*By vice.*] The reasoning here is not very analogical, and of course not conclusive or satisfactory. We can naturally and easily enough account for the apparent superabundance of many species of seeds and animals. Many flowers and seeds are intended, not more for the continuance of the species, than for the food of man, and multitudes of the lower creation, and many apparently for the sole purpose of delighting the senses and the taste of man. A similar reason accounts for the amazing prolific powers of several of the lower animals. We cannot say then, that there is any apparent superfluity or unnecessary waste. The same ultimate cause cannot be given as a reason for the final ruin and loss of an immense number of moral agents, and there is no apparent analogy in the two cases.

Part II. Chap. v. page 377.—[*Christ as a Prophet.*] Christ's character and office in this respect is very meagerly and deficiently stated. That office was certainly much more extensive, than simply to republish and sanction the religion of nature. It was to reveal to man those doctrines which human reason never knew, and could never have discovered.

The reasoning in regard to the sacrifice of Christ is not only deficient, but to a certain extent erroneous. Reason cannot comprehend nor explain all the reasons why God has permitted the existence of evil. But when we take this permission in connexion with the remedy provided in the sacrifice of the atonement, we see that it exhibits the character of God, not only as merciful and good, but as infinitely holy and just, and hating sin in every shape. We conceive these truths could not certainly be a deduction from the light of nature; nor perhaps could any of God's rational creatures, even of the highest order, have known the fulness of that character, without some such definite demonstration of this holiness and hatred of sin made known to the universe. The light that this doctrine of the atonement throws upon sacrifice gives it a clear and definite bearing, which reason could not have discovered, and which was only emblematically shadowed forth by all the sacrificial rites and ceremonies of the Old Testament.

Same chapter, page 378.—Reasoning from the history of the

human mind, as it has exhibited its desires and tendencies in the various forms of heathen superstition, we would be apt to conclude, that the doctrine of a Mediator is in accordance with the natural principles of the heart of man. It is the natural exposition of the felt inability of the human intellect to comprehend and hold intercourse with the infinite, of the experienced impossibility for man to render personally that service and homage which all nations have acknowledged it their duty to pay. In this view of the subject, which we think accurate, the Cabiri, the Mahuzzim, or God's protectors, the whole mythology of the gods and demi-gods of heathenism are a straining effort of the feebleness of humanity to find some intermediate connexion between its own lowliness and the infinitude of the incomprehensible Creator. The same principle is shown in its perversion in the saint-worship of the Roman Catholics. Revelation then only leads onward, and directs those tendencies which man blindly but ardently followed, and gives his faith a secure and sufficient resting-place.

Chap. vi. 385.—[*Christianity.*] There is evident error in this reasoning. Every prophet did not work miracles in attestation of his divine commission, and many of the prophecies did not receive their fulfilment till many ages afterwards. The degree of evidence, therefore, in general, which any prophet's preaching carried along with it, was in direct proportion to the measure of conviction, or of proof, which the people had of the truth of the religion under which he bore commission. And possessing the Old Testament, we cannot suppose that any additional miracles would have added to the sufficiency of that evidence. The same reasoning applies to the relative circumstances of the early Christians and those of our own days. Some, or many of the former witnessed the miracles accrediting the apostles of the new dispensation, and were convinced, of course, that they had a divine commission to teach. We have the doctrines in their perfected and collected form, and a sufficient amount of irrefragably attested miracles bearing the same evidence. Taking the aggregate of the history of our faith, we think it clear, that we have stronger and higher evidence of this kind, than any individual church of early Christians could have. Then we have in addition, as Butler hints, the standing and cumulative evidence of prophecy fulfilled and fulfilling, designed evidently to carry down throughout the history of time the divine attestation to the oneness of the plan, and to manifest to succeeding generations the continual super-

intendence of heaven, in sustaining and completing that pl  
Prophecy, taken in connexion with its fulfilment, directly c  
veys the idea of supreme power in the government of the n  
terial and moral world. Taking this view of the subject, wh  
we think the correct one, every succeeding generation, inst  
of having, as the reasoning of Butler in some parts wo  
lead us to suppose, a less and weaker, will be continually c  
taining stronger and clearer evidence of the truth of revelati  
till the final fulfilment of all prophecy, and the consummati  
of the world's history.

CUPAR, FIVE,  
*July, 1834.*

## INTRODUCTION.

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PROBABLE evidence is essentially distinguished from demonstrative by this, that it admits of degrees, and of all variety of them, from the highest moral certainty, to the very lowest presumption. We cannot, indeed, say a thing is probably true upon one very slight presumption for it ; because, as there may be probabilities on both sides of a question, there may be some against it : and though there be not, yet a slight presumption does not beget that degree of conviction, which is implied in saying a thing is probably true. But that the slightest possible presumption is of the nature of a probability, appears from hence, that such low presumption, often repeated, will amount even to moral certainty. Thus, a man's having observed the ebb and flow of the tide to-day, affords some sort of presumption, though the lowest imaginable, that it may happen again to-morrow ; but the observation of this event for so many days, and months, and ages together, as it has been observed by mankind, gives us a full assurance that it will.

That which chiefly constitutes *probability*, is expressed in the word *likely*, i.e. like some truth, (Verisimile) or true event ; like it, in itself, in its evidence, in some more or fewer of its circumstances. For when we determine a thing to be probably true, suppose that an event has or will come to pass, 'tis from the mind's remarking in it a likeness to some other event which we have observed has come to pass. And this observation forms, in numberless daily instances, a presumption, opinion, or full conviction, that such event has or will come to pass ; according as the observation is, that the like event has sometimes, most commonly, or always, so far as our observation

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come to pass at like distances of time, or place, or like occasions. Hence arises the belief, that a child, if twenty years, will grow up to the stature and strength of a man; that food will contribute to the preservation of it, and the want of it for such a number of days be its certain destruction. So, likewise, the rule and measure of our hopes and fears concerning the success of our pursuits; our expectations that others will act so and so in such circumstances; and our judgment that such actions proceed from such principles; these rely upon our having observed the like to what we hear, expect, judge; I say, upon our having observed the like either with respect to others or ourselves. And thus, the prince,\* who had always lived in a warm climate, had concluded, in the way of analogy, that there was no possibility of ice, as water's becoming hard, because he had always found it to be fluid and yielding; we, on the contrary, from experience, conclude, that there is no presumption at all against the possibility that it is supposable there may be frost in England any day in January next; probable, that there will on some day in the month; and that there is a moral certainty, *i. e.* for an expectation, without any doubt of it, in some other of the winter. This evidence, in its very nature, affords but an imper-

for his happiness, as what he certainly knows to be so. Nay, further, in questions of great consequence, a reasonable man will think it concerns him to remark lower probabilities and presumptions than these; such as amount to no more than showing one side of a question to be as supposable and credible as the other; nay, such as but amount to much less even than this. For numberless instances might be mentioned respecting the common pursuits of life, where a man would be thought, in a literal sense, distracted, who would not act, and with great application too, not only upon an even chance, but upon much less, and where the probability or chance was greatly against his succeeding. (See Part ii. ch. vi.).

It is not my design to inquire further into the nature, the foundation, and measure of probability; or whence it proceeds, that *likeness* should beget that presumption, opinion, and full conviction, which the human mind is formed to receive from it, and which it does necessarily produce in every one; or to guard against the errors to which reasoning from analogy is liable. This belongs to the subject of logic, and is a part of that subject which has not yet been thoroughly considered. Indeed I shall not take upon me to say, how far the extent, compass, and force, of analogical reasoning, can be reduced to general heads and rules, and the whole be formed into a system. But though so little in this way has been attempted by those who have treated of our intellectual powers, and the exercise of them, this does not hinder but that we may be, as we unquestionably are, assured, that analogy is of weight, in various degrees, towards determining our judgment, and our practice. Nor does it in anywise cease to be of weight in those cases, because persons, either given to dispute, or who require things to be stated with greater exactness than our faculties appear to admit of in practical matters, may find other cases, in which it is not easy to say, whether it be, or be not, of any weight; or instances of seeming analogies, which are really of none. It is enough to the present purpose to observe, that this general way of arguing is evidently natural, just, and conclusive. For there is no man can make a question but that the sun will rise to-morrow, and be seen, where it is seen at all, in the figure of a circle, and not in that of a square.

Hence, namely from analogical reasoning, Origen\* has with

\* Χρὲ μὲν τοι γι τοῦ ἀπαξ παραδείξαι τοῦ πείσαντος τὸν κόσμον εἶναι ταύτας οὐς γραφὰς πισυῖσθαι ὅτι ὁσα πρὸς τῆς πίστεως ἀπαντᾷ τοῖς ζήτοῦσι τὸν περὶ αὐτῆς λόγον, ταῦτα καὶ πρὸς τῶν γραφῶν. Philocal. p. 23. Ed. Cant.

singular sagacity observed, that “ he who believes the Scripture to have proceeded from him who is the Author of Nature, may well expect to find the same sort of difficulties in it, as are found in the constitution of Nature.” And, in a like way of reflection, it may be added, that he who denies the Scripture to have been from God, upon account of these difficulties, may, for the very same reason, deny the world to have been formed by him. On the other hand, if there be an analogy, or likeness, between that system of things and dispensation of Providence which revelation informs us of, and that system of things and dispensation of Providence, which experience, together with reason, informs us of, *i. e.* the known course of nature; this is a presumption, that they have both the same author and cause; at least so far as to answer objections against the former being from God, drawn from any thing which is analogical or similar to what is in the latter, which is acknowledged to be from him; for an Author of Nature is here supposed.

Forming our notions of the constitution and government of the world upon reasoning, without foundation for the principles which we assume, whether from the attributes of God or any thing else, is building a world upon hypothesis, like Des Cartes. Forming our notions upon reasoning from principles which are certain, but applied to cases to which we have no ground to apply them, (like those who explain the structure of the human body, and the nature of diseases and medicines, from mere mathematics, without sufficient *data*) is an error much akin to the former: since what is assumed, in order to make the reasoning applicable, is *hypothesis*. But it must be allowed just, to join abstract reasonings with the observation of facts, and argue from such facts as are known, to others that are like them; from that part of the Divine government over intelligent creatures, which comes under our view, to that larger and more general government over them, which is beyond it; and, from what is present, to collect what is likely, credible, or not incredible, will be hereafter.

This method, then, of concluding and determining, being practical, and what, if we will act at all, we cannot but act upon in the common pursuits of life; being evidently conclusive, in various degrees, proportionable to the degree and exactness of the whole analogy or likeness; and having so great authority for its introduction into the subject of religion, even revealed religion, my design is to apply it to that subject in general, both natural and revealed; taking for proved, that there is an intelligent Author of Nature, and natural Governor

of the world. For as there is no presumption against this prior to the proof of it, so it has been often proved with accumulated evidence; from this argument of analogy and final causes; from abstract reasonings; from the most ancient tradition and testimony; and from the general consent of mankind. Nor does it appear, so far as I can find, to be denied by the generality of those who profess themselves dissatisfied with the evidence of religion.

As there are some, who, instead of thus attending to what is in fact the constitution of Nature, form their notions of God's government upon hypothesis; so there are others who indulge themselves in vain and idle speculations, how the world might possibly have been framed otherwise than it is; and upon supposition that things might, in imagining that they should, have been disposed and carried on after a better model, than what appears in the present disposition and conduct of them. Suppose, now, a person of such a turn of mind to go on with his reveries, till he had at length fixed upon some particular plan of Nature, as appearing to him the best,—one shall scarce be thought guilty of detraction against human understanding, if one should say, even beforehand, that the plan which this speculative person would fix upon, though he were the wisest of the sons of men, probably would not be the very best, even according to his own notions of *best*; whether he thought that to be so which afforded occasions and motives for the exercise of the greatest virtue, or which was productive of the greatest happiness, or that these two were necessarily connected, and run up into one and the same plan. However, it may not be amiss, once for all, to see what would be the amount of these emendations and imaginary improvements upon the system of Nature, or how far they would mislead us. And it seems there could be no stopping, till we came to some such conclusions as these:—That all creatures should at first be made as perfect and as happy, as they were capable of ever being: that nothing, to be sure, of hazard or danger should be put upon them to do; some indolent persons would perhaps think, nothing at all: or certainly, that effectual care should be taken, that they should, whether necessarily or not, yet eventually and in fact, always do what was right and most conducive to happiness, which would be thought easy for infinite power to effect; either by not giving them any principles which would endanger their going wrong, or by laying the right motive of action, in every instance, before their minds continually, in so strong a manner, as would never fail of inducing them to act



conformably to it: and that the whole method of government by punishments should be rejected, as absurd; as an awkward round-about method of carrying things on; nay, as contrary to a principal purpose, for which it would be supposed created were made, namely happiness.

Now, without considering what is to be said in particular of the several parts of this train of folly and extravagance has been above intimated, is a full, direct, general answer, namely, that we may see beforehand that we have not time for this kind of speculation. For though it be admitted from the first principles of our nature, we unavoidably must or determine some ends to be absolutely in themselves good, or able to others, and that the ends now mentioned, or, if they run up into one, that this one is absolutely the best, and consequently, that we must conclude the ultimate end designed in the constitution of Nature and conduct of Providence, to be the most virtue and happiness possible: yet we are far from being able to judge what particular disposition of things will be the most friendly and assistant to virtue, or what means are absolutely necessary to produce the most happiness in a world of such extent as our own world may be, taking in all time past and to come, though we should suppose it detached from the whole of things. Indeed, we are so far from being able to judge of this, that we are not judges what may be the most proper means of raising and conducting one person to the highest perfection and happiness of his nature. Nay, even in the affairs of the present life, we find men of different education and ranks are not competent judges of the conduct of another. Our whole nature leads us to ascribe all moral perfection to God, and to deny all imperfection of him. As the conduct of God will for ever be a practical proof of his moral character, so will the conduct of man consider what a practical proof is, because it is the conduct of God speaking in us. And from hence we conclude that virtue must be the happiness, and vice the misery, of a creature; and that regularity, and order, and right, can prevail, finally, in a universe under his government. We are in no sort judges what are the necessary means of accomplishing this end.

Let us, then, instead of that idle and not very innocent employment of forming imaginary models of a world, and of governing it, turn our thoughts to what we experience in the conduct of Nature with respect to intelligent creatures, which may be resolved into general laws or rules of administration, in the same way as many of the laws of Nature

specting inanimate matter, may be collected from experiments. And let us compare the known constitution and course of things with what is said to be the moral system of Nature, the acknowledged dispensations of Providence, or that government which we find ourselves under, with what religion teaches us to believe and expect, and see whether they are not analogous, and of a piece. And upon such a comparison it will, I think, be found, that they are very much so; that both may be traced up to the same general laws, and resolved into the same principles of Divine conduct.

The analogy here proposed to be considered is of pretty large extent, and consists of several parts; in some more, in others less, exact. In some few instances, perhaps, it may amount to a real practical proof, in others not so; yet in these it is a confirmation of what is proved otherways. It will undeniably show, what too many want to have shown them, that the system of religion, both natural and revealed, considered only as a system, and prior to the proof of it, is not a subject of ridicule, unless that of nature be so too. And it will afford an answer to almost all objections against the system both of natural and revealed religion, though not perhaps an answer in so great a degree, yet in a very considerable degree an answer, to the objections against the evidence of it; for, objections against a proof, and objections against what is said to be proved, the reader will observe, are different things.

Now, the Divine government of the world, implied in the notion of religion in general, and of Christianity, contains in it,—That mankind is appointed to live in a future state, (ch. i. ;) that there every one shall be rewarded or punished, (ch. ii. ;) rewarded or punished respectively for all that behaviour here which we comprehend under the words, virtuous or vicious, morally good or evil, (ch. iii. ;) that our present life is a probation, a state of trial, (ch. iv.) and of discipline, (ch. v.) for that future one; notwithstanding the objections which men may fancy they have, from notions of necessity, against there being any such moral plan as this at all, (ch. vi. ;) and whatever objections may appear to lie against the wisdom and goodness of it, as it stands so imperfectly made known to us at present, (ch. vii. :) that this world being in a state of apostasy and wickedness, and consequently of ruin, and the sense both of their condition and duty being greatly corrupted amongst men, this gave occasion for an additional dispensation of Providence, of the utmost importance, (Part ii. ch. i.) proved by miracles, (ch. ii.) but containing in it many things appearing to us

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... and not to have been expected, (ch. iii. ;) a dispensation of Providence, which is a scheme or system of things (ch. iv.) carried on by the mediation of a Divine person, the Messiah, in order to the recovery of the world, (ch. v.) yet not revealed to all men, nor proved with the strongest possible evidence to all those to whom it is revealed; but only to such a part of mankind, and with such particular evidence as the will of God thought fit, (ch. vi. vii.) The design of the following Treatise will be to show, that the several parts principally objected against in this moral and political dispensation, including its scheme, its publication, and the proof which God hath afforded us of its truth; that the particular parts principally objected against in this whole dispensation, are analogous to what is experienced in the common and course of Nature, or Providence; that the chief objections themselves, which are alleged against the former, are no other than what may be alleged with like justness against the latter, where they are found in fact to be inconclusive; and that this argument, from analogy, is in general unanswerable, and undoubtedly of weight on the side of religion, (ch. viii.) notwithstanding the objections which may seem to be against it, and the real ground which there may be for difference of opinion, as to the particular degree of weight which should be laid upon it. The next general account of what is

**THE**  
**ANALOGY OF RELIGION**  
**TO THE**  
**CONSTITUTION AND COURSE OF NATURE.**

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**PART I.**  
**OF NATURAL RELIGION.**

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**CHAP. I.**  
**OF A FUTURE LIFE.**

**STRANGE** difficulties have been raised by some concerning personal identity, or the sameness of living agents, implied in the notion of our existing now and hereafter, or in any two successive moments ; which whoever thinks it worth while, may see considered in the first Dissertation at the end of this Treatise. But, without regard to any of them here, let us consider what the analogy of Nature, and the several changes which we have undergone, and those which we know we may undergo without being destroyed, suggest, as to the effect which death may, or may not, have upon us ; and whether it be not from thence probable, that we may survive this change, and exist in a future state of life and perception.

I. From our being born into the present world in the helpless imperfect state of infancy, and having arrived from thence to mature age, we find it to be a general law of nature in our own species, that the same creatures, the same individuals, should exist in degrees of life and perception, with capacities of action, of enjoyment, and suffering, in one period of their being, greatly different from those appointed them in another period of it. And in other creatures the same law holds. For the difference of their capacities and states of life at their birth (to go no higher) and in maturity ; the change of worms into

#### OF A FUTURE LIFE.

the vast enlargement of their locomotive powers by change; and birds and insects bursting the shell, their escape, and by this means entering into a new world, furnished with new accommodations for them, and finding a new action assigned them;—these are instances of this law of nature. Thus, all the various and wonderful transformations of animals are to be taken into consideration about the states of life in which we ourselves existed formerly in the womb and in our infancy, are almost as different from the present, in mature age, as it is possible to conceive states or degrees of life can be. Therefore, that we exist hereafter in a state as different (suppose) from our present as this is from our former, is but according to the law of nature; according to a natural order, or appointment of the very same kind with what we have already experienced.

We know we are endued with capacities of action, of pleasure, and misery; for we are conscious of acting, of feeling pleasure, and suffering pain. Now, that we have powers and capacities before death, is a presumption we shall retain them through and after death; indeed, a probability of it abundantly sufficient to act upon, unless there

would remain after it : which shows the high probability that our living powers will continue after death, unless there be some ground to think that death is their destruction.\* For, if it would be in a manner certain that we should survive death, provided it were certain that death would not be our destruction, it must be highly probable we shall survive it, if there be no ground to think death will be our destruction.

Now, though I think it must be acknowledged, that prior to the natural and moral proofs of a future life commonly insisted upon, there would arise a general confused suspicion, that in the great shock and alteration which we shall undergo by death, we, *i. e.* our living powers, might be wholly destroyed ; yet even prior to those proofs, there is really no particular distinct ground, or reason, for this apprehension at all, so far as I can find. If there be, it must arise either from *the reason of the thing*, or from *the analogy of nature*.

But we cannot argue from *the reason of the thing*, that death is the destruction of living agents, because we know not at all what death is in itself ; but only some of its effects, such as the dissolution of flesh, skin, and bones : And these effects do in nowise appear to imply the destruction of a living agent. And, besides, as we are greatly in the dark upon what the exercise of our living powers depends, so we are wholly ignorant what the powers themselves depend upon ; the powers themselves, as distinguished, not only from their actual exercise, but also from the present capacity of exercising them ; and as opposed to their destruction : for sleep, or, however, a swoon, shews us not only that these powers exist when they are not exercised, as the passive power of motion does in inanimate matter ; but shews also that they exist, when there is no present capacity of exercising them ; or that the capacities of exercising them for the present, as well as the actual exercise of them, may be suspended, and yet the powers themselves remain undestroyed. Since, then, we know not at all upon what the existence of our

\* *Destruction of living powers*, is a manner of expression unavoidably ambiguous ; and may signify either *the destruction of a living being, so as that the same living being shall be incapable of ever perceiving or acting again at all ; or the destruction of those means and instruments by which it is capable of its present state of perception and of action.* It is here used in the former sense. When it is used in the latter, the epithet *present* is added. The loss of a man's eye is a destruction of living powers in the latter sense. But we have no reason to think the destruction of living powers, in the former sense, to be possible. We have no more reason to think a being, endued with living powers, ever loses them during its whole existence, than to believe that a stone ever acquires them.

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owers depends, this shews further, there can no probability be collected from the reason of the thing, that death will be the destruction; because their existence may depend upon powers in no degree affected by death; upon somewhat quite out of the reach of this kind of terrors. So that there is no reason more certain than that *the reason of the thing* shows us no connection between death and the destruction of living agents. If we find any thing throughout the whole *analogy of nature* to afford us even the slightest presumption, that animals will lose their living powers; much less, if it were possible, that they lose them by death; for we have no faculties which enable us to trace any beyond or through it, so as to see what becomes of them. This event removes them from our view. It destroys the *sensible* proof, which we had before their death, that they were possessed of living powers, but does not appear to afford the least reason to believe, that they are then, or by death, deprived of them.

Our knowing, that they were possessed of these powers, during the very period to which we have faculties capable of retaining them, is itself a probability of their retaining them. And this is confirmed, and a sensible credibility added to it, by observing the very great and astonishing powers which we have experienced; so great, that our exis-

and so discernible. But, since consciousness is a single and indivisible power, it should seem that the subject in which it resides, must be so too. For, were the motion of any particle of matter absolutely one and indivisible, so as that it should imply a contradiction to suppose part of this motion to exist, and part not to exist, *i. e.* part of this matter to move, and part to be at rest; then its power of motion would be indivisible; and so also would the subject in which the power inheres, namely, the particle of matter; for, if this could be divided into two, one part might be moved and the other at rest, which is contrary to the supposition. In like manner, it has been argued,\* and, for any thing appearing to the contrary, justly, that since the perception, or consciousness, which we have of our own existence is indivisible, so as that it is a contradiction to suppose one part of it should be here, and the other there; the perceptive power, or the power of consciousness, is indivisible too; and, consequently, the subject in which it resides, *i. e.* the conscious being. Now, upon supposition that living agent each man calls himself, is thus a single being, which there is at least no more difficulty in conceiving than in conceiving it to be a compound, and of which there is the proof now mentioned; it follows that our organized bodies are no more ourselves, or part of ourselves, than any other matter around us. And it is as easy to conceive how matter, which is no part of ourselves, may be appropriated to us in the manner which our present bodies are, as how we can receive impressions from, and have power over any matter. It is as easy to conceive, that we may exist out of bodies, as in them; that we might have animated bodies of any other organs and senses wholly different from these now given us, and that we may hereafter animate these same or new bodies variously modified and organized, as to conceive how we can animate such bodies as our present. And, lastly, the dissolution of all these several organized bodies, supposing ourselves to have successively animated them, would have no more conceivable tendency to destroy the living beings, ourselves, or deprive us of living faculties, the faculties of perception and of action, than the dissolution of any foreign matter which we are capable of receiving impressions from, and making use of for the common occasions of life.

II. The simplicity and absolute oneness of a living agent cannot, indeed, from the nature of the thing, be properly

\* See Dr. Clarke's Letter to Mr. Dodwell, and the Defences of it



proved by experimental observations. But as these *fall in* with the supposition of its unity, so they plainly lead us to *conclude* certainly, that our gross organized bodies, with which we perceive the objects of sense, and with which we act, are no part of ourselves, and therefore shew us, that we have no reason to believe their destruction to be ours ; even without determining whether our living substances be material or immaterial. For we see by experience, that men may lose their limbs, their organs of sense, and even the greatest part of their bodies, and yet remain the same living agents : And persons can trace up the existence of themselves to a time when the bulk of their bodies was extremely small, in comparison of what it is in mature age ; and we cannot but think, that they might then have lost a considerable part of that small body, and yet have remained the same living agents, as they may now lose great part of their present body, and remain so. And it is certain, that the bodies of all animals are in a constant flux, from that never-ceasing attrition which there is in every part of them. Now, things of this kind unavoidably teach us to distinguish between these living agents, ourselves, and large quantities of matter, in which we are very nearly interested ; since these may be alienated, and actually are in a daily course of succession, and changing their owners ; whilst we are assured, that each living agent remains one and the same permanent being. (See Diss. I.) And this general observation leads us on to the following ones.

*First*, That we have no way of determining by experience, what is the certain bulk of the living being each man calls himself ; and yet, till it be determined that it is larger in bulk than the solid elementary particles of matter, which there is no ground to think any natural power can dissolve, there is no sort of reason to think death to be the dissolution of it, of the living being, even though it should not be absolutely indiscerptible.

*Secondly*, From our being so nearly related to, and interested in certain systems of matter, suppose our flesh and bones, and afterwards ceasing to be at all related to them, the living agents, ourselves, remaining all this while undestroyed, notwithstanding such alienation ; and consequently these systems of matter not being ourselves : it follows further, that we have no ground to conclude any other, suppose *internal systems* of matter, to be the living agents ourselves ; because we can have no ground to conclude this, but from our relation to, and interest in such other systems of matter : and, therefore, we can have no reason to conclude what befalls those systems of matter at death, to be

the destruction of the living agents. We have already, several times over, lost a great part, or perhaps the whole of our body, according to certain common established laws of nature ; yet we remain the same living agents : when we shall lose as great a part, or the whole, by another common established law of nature, death, why may we not also remain the same ? That the alienation has been gradual in one case, and in the other will be more at once, does not prove any thing to the contrary. We have passed undestroyed through those many and great revolutions of matter, so peculiarly appropriated to us ourselves ; why should we imagine death will be so fatal to us ? Nor can it be objected, that what is thus alienated, or lost, is no part of our original solid body, but only adventitious matter ; because we may lose entire limbs, which must have contained many solid parts and vessels of the original body : or if this be not admitted, we have no proof that any of these solid parts are dissolved or alienated by death ; though, by the way, we are very nearly related to that extraneous or adventitious matter, whilst it continues united to and distending the several parts of our solid body. But, after all, the relation a person bears to those parts of his body to which he is the most nearly related, what does it appear to amount to but this, that the living agent and those parts of the body mutually affect each other ? And the same thing, the same thing in kind, though not in degree, may be said of *all foreign* matter which gives us ideas, and which we have any power over. From these observations the whole ground of the imagination is removed, that the dissolution of any matter is the destruction of a living agent, from the interest he once had in such matter.

*Thirdly*, If we consider our body somewhat more distinctly, as made up of organs and instruments of perception and of motion, it will bring us to the same conclusion. Thus, the common optical experiments show, and even the observation how sight is assisted by glasses shows, that we see with our eyes in the same sense as we see with glasses. Nor is there any reason to believe, that we see with them in any other sense ; any other, I mean, which would lead us to think the eye itself a percipient. The like is to be said of hearing : and our feeling distant solid matter by means of somewhat in our hand, seems an instance of the like kind, as to the subject we are considering. All these are instances of foreign matter, or such as is no part of our body, being instrumental in preparing objects for, and conveying them to the perceiving power, in a manner similar, or like to the manner in which our organs of sense prepare and convey

them. Both are, in a like way, instruments of our receiving such ideas from external objects, as the Author of nature appointed those external objects to be the occasions of exciting in us. However, glasses are evidently instances of this : namely of matter, which is no part of our body, preparing objects for, and conveying them towards the perceiving power, in like manner as our bodily organs do. And if we see with our eyes only in the same manner as we do with glasses, the like may justly be concluded from analogy, of all our other senses. It is not intended, by any thing here said, to affirm, that the whole apparatus of vision, or of perception by any other of our senses, can be traced, through all its steps, quite up to the living power of seeing, or perceiving ; but that, so far as it can be traced by experimental observations, so far it appears, that our organs of sense prepare and convey on objects, in order to their being perceived, in like manner as foreign matter does, without affording any shadow of appearance that they themselves perceive. And that we have no reason to think our organs of sense percipients, is confirmed by instances of persons losing some of them, the living beings themselves, their former occupiers, remaining unimpaired. It is confirmed also by the experience of dreams ; by which we find we are at present possessed of a latent, and what would otherwise be an unimagined unknown power of perceiving sensible objects, in as strong and lively a manner without our external organs of sense, as with them.

So also with regard to our power of moving, or directing motion by will and choice : upon the destruction of a limb, this active power remains, as it evidently seems unlessened ; so as that the living being, who has suffered this loss, would be capable of moving as before, if it had another limb to move with. It can walk by the help of an artificial leg, just as it can make use of a pole or a lever, to reach towards itself and to move things beyond the length and the power of its natural arm : and this last it does in the same manner as it reaches and moves, with its natural arm, things nearer and of less weight. Nor is there so much as any appearance of our limbs being endowed with a power of moving or directing themselves ; though they are adapted, like the several parts of a machine, to be the instruments of motion to each other ; and some parts of the same limb, to be instruments of motion to other parts of it.

Thus, a man determines that he will look at such an object through a microscope ; or, being lame suppose, that he will walk to such a place with a staff a week hence. His eyes and his feet no more determine in these cases, than the microscope

and the staff. Nor is there any ground to think they any more put the determination in practice, or that his eyes are the seers or his feet the movers, in any other sense than as the microscope and the staff are. Upon the whole, then, our organs of sense and our limbs are certainly instruments, which the living persons, ourselves, make use of to perceive and move with : There is not any probability, that they are any more ; nor, consequently, that we have any other kind of relation to them, than what we may have to any other foreign matter formed into instruments of perception and motion, suppose into a microscope or a staff (I say, any other kind of relation, for I am not speaking of the degree of it) ; nor, consequently, is there any probability, that the alienation or dissolution of these instruments is the destruction of the perceiving and moving agent.

And thus our finding, that the dissolution of matter in which living beings were most nearly interested, is not their dissolution ; and that the destruction of several of the organs and instruments of perception and of motion belonging to them, is not their destruction ; shows demonstratively, that there is no ground to think, that the dissolution of any other matter, or destruction of any other organs and instruments, will be the dissolution or destruction of living agents, from the like kind of relation. And we have no reason to think we stand in any other kind of relation to any thing which we find dissolved by death.

But it is said, these observations are equally applicable to brutes ; and it is thought an insuperable difficulty, that they should be immortal, and, by consequence, capable of everlasting happiness. Now, this manner of expression is both invidious and weak ; but the thing intended by it, is really no difficulty at all, either in the way of natural or moral consideration. For, 1st, Suppose the invidious thing designed in such a manner of expression, were really implied, as it is not in the least, in the natural immortality of brutes ; namely, that they must arrive at great attainments, and become rational and moral agents ; even this would be no difficulty, since we know not what latent powers and capacities they may be endued with. There was once, prior to experience, as great presumption against human creatures, as there is against the brute creatures, arriving at that degree of understanding which we have in mature age ; for we can trace up our own existence to the same original with theirs. And we find it to be a general law of nature, that creatures endued with capacities of virtue and religion, should be placed in a condition of being in which they are altogether without the use of them for a considerable length of their d

tion, as in infancy and childhood. And great part of the human species go out of the present world, before they come to the exercise of these capacities in any degree at all. But then, 2dly, The natural immortality of brutes does not in the least imply, that they are endued with any latent capacities of a rational or moral nature. And the economy of the universe might require, that there should be living creatures without any capacities of this kind. And all difficulties, as to the manner how they are to be disposed of, are so apparently and wholly founded on our ignorance, that it is wonderful they should be insisted upon by any but such as are weak enough to think they are acquainted with the whole system of things. There is, then, absolutely nothing at all in this objection, which is so rhetorically urged against the greatest part of the natural proofs or presumptions of the immortality of human minds : I say, the greatest part ; for it is less applicable to the following observation, which is more peculiar to mankind :—

III. That as it is evident our *present* powers and capacities of reason, memory, and affection, do not depend upon our gross body, in the manner in which perception by our organs of sense does ; so they do not appear to depend upon it at all, in any such manner as to give ground to think, that the dissolution of this body will be the destruction of these our *present* powers of reflection, as it will of our powers of sensation ; or to give ground to conclude, even that it will be so much as a suspension of the former.

Human creatures exist at present in two states of life and perception, greatly different from each other ; each of which has its own peculiar laws, and its own peculiar enjoyments and sufferings. When any of our senses are affected, or appetites gratified with the objects of them, we may be said to exist, or live, in a state of sensation. When none of our senses are affected, or appetites gratified, and yet we perceive, and reason, and act, we may be said to exist, or live, in a state of reflection. Now it is by no means certain, that any thing which is dissolved by death is any way necessary to the living being, in this its state of reflection, after ideas are gained. For though, from our present constitution and condition of being, our external organs of sense are necessary for conveying in ideas to our reflecting powers, as carriages, and levers, and scaffolds are in architecture ; yet, when these ideas are brought in, we are capable of reflecting in the most intense degree, and of enjoying the greatest pleasure, and feeling the greatest pain, by means

of that reflection, without any assistance from our senses ; and without any at all, which we know of, from that body which will be dissolved by death. It does not appear, then, that the relation of this gross body to the reflecting being, is in any degree necessary to thinking ; to our intellectual enjoyments or sufferings : nor, consequently, that the dissolution, or alienation, of the former by death, will be the destruction of those present powers, which render us capable of this state of reflection. Further, there are instances of mortal diseases, which do not at all affect our present intellectual powers ; and this affords a presumption, that those diseases will not destroy these present powers. Indeed, from the observations made above, [pages 246—248,] it appears, that there is no presumption, from their mutually affecting each other, that the dissolution of the body is the destruction of the living agent. And by the same reasoning it must appear too, that there is no presumption, from their mutually affecting each other, that the dissolution of the body is the destruction of our present reflecting powers ; but instances of their not affecting each other, afford a presumption of the contrary. Instances of mortal diseases not impairing our present reflecting powers, evidently turn our thoughts even from imagining such diseases to be the destruction of them. Several things, indeed, greatly affect all our living powers, and at length suspend the exercise of them ; as, for instance, drowsiness, increasing till it ends in sound sleep : and from hence we might have imagined it would destroy them, till we found, by experience, the weakness of this way of judging. But, in the diseases now mentioned, there is not so much as this shadow of probability, to lead us to any such conclusion, as to the reflecting powers which we have at present ; for, in those diseases, persons the moment before death appear to be in the highest vigour of life. They discover apprehension, memory, reason, all entire ; with the utmost force of affection ; sense of character, of shame and honour ; and the highest mental enjoyments and sufferings, even to the last gasp ; and these surely prove even greater vigour of life than bodily strength does. Now, what pretence is there for thinking, that a progressive disease, when arrived to such a degree, I mean that degree which is mortal, will destroy those powers, which were not impaired, which were not affected by it, during its whole progress, quite up to that degree ? And if death, by diseases of this kind, is not the destruction of our present reflecting powers, it will scarce be thought that death by any other means is.

It is obvious that this general observation may be carried on

#### OF A FUTURE LIFE.

And there appears so little connexion between our powers of sensation, and our present powers of reflection, there is no reason to conclude that death, which destroys the former, does so much as suspend the exercise of the latter, or interrupt our *continuing* to exist in the like state of reflection as we do now. For, suspension of reason, memory, and the sensations which they excite, is no part of the idea of death, as implied in our notion of it. And our daily experiencing our powers to be exercised, without any assistance, that we are separated from those bodies which will be dissolved by death; and finding often, that the exercise of them is so lively to us;—these things afford a sensible apprehension, that death may not perhaps be so much as a discontinuance of the exercise of these powers, nor of the enjoyments and sufferings which they implies;\* so that our posthumous life, whatever there may be in it additional to our present, yet may not be entirely new, but going on. Death may, in some sort, and in some respects, answer to our birth, which is not a suspension of our faculties which we had before it, or a total change of the life in which we existed when in the womb, but a continuance of both, with such and such great alterations. For ought we know of ourselves, of our present life, and of death, may immediately in the natural course of



as we experience from sleep and a swoon, that we cannot in any-wise argue from one to the other; or conclude, even to the lowest degree of probability, that the same kind of force which is sufficient to suspend our faculties, though it be increased ever so much, will be sufficient to destroy them.

These observations together may be sufficient to show, how little presumption there is that death is the destruction of human creatures. However, there is the shadow of analogy, which may lead us to imagine it is; the supposed likeness which is observed between the decay of vegetables and of living creatures. And this likeness is indeed sufficient to afford the poets very apt allusions to the flowers of the field, in their pictures of the frailty of our present life. But in reason, the analogy is so far from holding, that there appears no ground even for the comparison, as to the present question; because one of the two subjects compared is wholly void of that, which is the principal and chief thing in the other, the power of perception and of action; and which is the only thing we are inquiring about the continuance of. So that the destruction of a vegetable is an event not similar, or analogous, to the destruction of a living agent.

But if, as was above intimated, leaving off the delusive custom of substituting imagination in the room of experience, we would confine ourselves to what we do know and understand; if we would argue only from that, and from that form our expectations, it would appear, at first sight, that as no probability of living beings ever ceasing to be so, can be concluded from the reason of the thing; so none can be collected from the analogy of nature, because we cannot trace any living beings beyond death. But as we are conscious that we are endued with capacities of perception and of action, and are living persons, what we are to go upon is, that we shall continue so till we foresee some accident, or event, which will endanger those capacities, or be likely to destroy us; which death does in nowise appear to be.

And thus, when we go out of this world, we may pass into new scenes, and a new state of life and action, just as naturally as we came into the present. And this new state may naturally be a social one. And the advantages of it, advantages of every kind, may naturally be bestowed, according to some fixed general laws of wisdom, upon every one in proportion to the degrees of his virtue. And though the advantages of that future natural state should not be bestowed, as those of the present in some measure are, by the will of the society, but



entirely by his more immediate action, upon whom the whole frame of nature depends, yet this distribution may be just as natural, as their being distributed here by the instrumentality of men. And, indeed, though one were to allow any confused undetermined sense, which people please to put upon the word *natural*, it would be a shortness of thought scarce credible, to imagine that no system or course of things can be so, but only what we see at present; (See Part ii. ch. ii., and Part ii. ch. iii.) especially whilst the probability of a future life, or the natural immortality of the soul, is admitted upon the evidence of reason; because this really is both admitting and denying at once, a state of being different from the present to be natural. But the only distinct meaning of that word is, *stated, fixed, or settled*; since what is natural as much requires and presupposes an intelligent agent to render it so, *i. e.* to effect it continually, or at stated times, as what is supernatural or miraculous does to effect it for once. And from hence it must follow, that persons' notion of what is natural will be enlarged, in proportion to their greater knowledge of the works of God and the dispensations of his Providence. Nor is there any absurdity in supposing, that there may be beings in the universe, whose capacities, and knowledge, and views, may be so extensive, as that the whole Christian dispensation may to them appear natural, *i. e.* analogous or conformable to God's dealings with other parts of his creation; as natural as the visible known course of things appears to us. For there seems scarce any other possible sense to be put upon the word, but that only in which it is here used: similar, stated, or uniform.

This credibility of a future life, which has been here insisted upon, how little soever it may satisfy our curiosity, seems to answer all the purposes of religion, in like manner as a demonstrative proof would. Indeed, a proof, even a demonstrative one, of a future life, would not be a proof of religion. For, that we are to live hereafter, is just as reconcilable with the scheme of atheism, and as well to be accounted for by it, as that we are now alive is; and therefore nothing can be more absurd than to argue from that scheme, that there can be no future state. But as religion implies a future state, any presumption against such a state is a presumption against religion. And the foregoing observations remove all presumptions of that sort, and prove, to a very considerable degree of probability, one fundamental doctrine of religion; which, if believed, would greatly open and dispose the mind seriously to attend to the general evidence of the whole.

## CHAP. II.

OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD BY REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS;  
AND PARTICULARLY OF THE LATTER.

THAT which makes the question concerning a future life to be of so great importance to us, is our capacity of happiness and misery. And that which makes the consideration of it to be of so great importance to us, is the supposition of our happiness and misery hereafter, depending upon our actions here. Without this, indeed, curiosity could not but sometimes bring a subject, in which we may be so highly interested, to our thoughts; especially upon the mortality of others, or the near prospect of our own. But reasonable men would not take any farther thought about hereafter, than what should happen thus occasionally to rise in their minds, if it were certain that our future interest no way depended upon our present behaviour; whereas, on the contrary, if there be ground, either from analogy or any thing else, to think it does, then there is reason also for the most active thought and solicitude to secure that interest; to behave so as that we may escape that misery, and obtain that happiness in another life, which we not only suppose ourselves capable of, but which we apprehend also is put in our own power. And whether there be ground for this last apprehension, certainly would deserve to be most seriously considered, were there no other proof of a future life and interest, than that presumptive one which the foregoing observations amount to.

Now, in the present state, all which we enjoy, and a great part of what we suffer, is *put in our own power*. For pleasure and pain are the consequences of our actions; and we are

endued by the Author of our nature with capacities of foreseeing these consequences. We find, by experience, he does not so much as preserve our lives, exclusively of our own care and attention to provide ourselves with, and to make use of that sustenance, by which he has appointed our lives shall be preserved, and without which he has appointed they shall not be preserved at all. And in general we foresee, that the external things which are the objects of our various passions, can neither be obtained nor enjoyed, without exerting ourselves in such and such manners; but by thus exerting ourselves, we obtain and enjoy these objects, in which our natural good consists, or by this means God gives us the possession and enjoyment of them. I know not that we have any one kind or degree of enjoyment, but by the means of our own actions. And by prudence and care, we may, for the most part, pass our days in tolerable ease and quiet; or, on the contrary, we may, by rashness, ungoverned passion, wilfulness, or even by negligence, make ourselves as miserable as ever we please. And many do please to make themselves extremely miserable, *i. e.* to do what they know beforehand will render them so. They follow those ways, the fruit of which they know, by instruction, example, experience, will be disgrace, and poverty, and sickness, and untimely death. This every one observes to be the general course of things; though it is to be allowed, we cannot find by experience, that all our sufferings are owing to our own follies.

Why the Author of nature does not give his creatures promiscuously such and such perceptions, without regard to their behaviour; why he does not make them happy without the instrumentality of their own actions, and prevent their bringing any sufferings upon themselves, is another matter. Perhaps there be some impossibilities in the nature of things, which we are unacquainted with, (Part i. ch. vii. :) Or less happiness, it may be, would, upon the whole, be produced by such a method of conduct, than is by the present; Or, perhaps, divine goodness, with which, if I mistake not, we may make very free in our speculations, may not be a bare single disposition to produce happiness; but a disposition to make the good, the faithful, the honest man, happy. Perhaps an infinitely perfect Mind may be pleased with seeing his creatures behave suitably to the nature which he has given them; to the relations which he has placed them in to each other; and to that which they stand in to himself: that relation to himself, which, during their existence is even necessary, and which is the most im-

it one of all. Perhaps, I say, an infinitely perfect Mind is pleased with this moral piety of moral agents, in and of itself, as well as upon account of its being essentially con-  
 : to the happiness of his creation. Or the whole end, which God made, and thus governs the world, may be beyond the reach of our faculties : There may be some-  
 in it as impossible for us to have any conception of, as a blind man to have a conception of colours. But however  
 e, it is certain matter of universal experience, that the usual method of divine administration is, forewarning us, or  
 : us capacities to foresee, with more or less clearness, that we shall act so and so, we shall have such enjoyments ; if so and such sufferings ; and giving us those enjoyments, and making us feel those sufferings, in consequence of our actions. But all this is to be ascribed to the general course of nature." True. This is the very thing which I am observing. It is to be ascribed to the general course of nature ; i. e. not merely to the words, or ideas, *course of nature*, but to him who appointed it, and put things into it ; or to a course of action, from its uniformity or constancy called natural,

254.] and which necessarily implies an operating

For, when men find themselves necessitated to confess that God is the author of nature, or that God is the natural governor of the world, they must not deny this again, because his government is not arbitrary ; they must not deny that he does all things at all, and that he does them constantly ; because the effects of his government are permanent, whether his acting be so or not ; though there is no reason to think it is not. In short, every man, in everything he does, naturally acts upon the forethought and consideration of avoiding evil, or obtaining good : and if the whole course of things be the appointment of God, and our natural faculties of knowledge and experience are given us by him, then the good and bad consequences which follow our actions are his appointment, and our foresight of those consequences is a warning given us by him, how we are to act.

Is the pleasure, then, naturally accompanying every gratification of passion, intended to put us upon gratifying ourselves in every such particular instance, and as a reward to us for so doing ?" No, certainly. Nor is it to be thought that our eyes were naturally intended to give us the sight of a particular object to which they do or can extend ; objects which are destructive of them, or which, for any other reason, it may become us to turn our eyes from. Yet there is no doubt, but that our eyes were intended for us to see with.

So neither is there any doubt, but that the foreseen pleasures and pains, belonging to the passions, were intended, in general, to induce mankind to act in such and such manners.

Now, from this general observation, obvious to every one, that God has given us to understand he has appointed satisfaction and delight to be the consequence of our acting in one manner, and pain and uneasiness of our acting in another, and of our not acting at all ; and that we find the consequences, which we were beforehand informed of, uniformly to follow ; we may learn, that we are at present actually under his government, in the strictest and most proper sense ; in such a sense, as that he rewards and punishes us for our actions. An Author of nature being supposed, it is not so much a deduction of reason as a matter of experience, that we are thus under his government : under his government, in the same sense as we are under the government of civil magistrates. Because the annexing pleasure to some actions, and pain to others, in our power to do or forbear, and giving notice of this appointment beforehand to those whom it concerns, is the proper formal notion of government. Whether the pleasure or pain which thus follows upon our behaviour, be owing to the Author of nature's acting upon us every moment which we feel it, or to his having at once contrived and executed his own part in the plan of the world, makes no alteration as to the matter before us. For, if civil magistrates could make the sanctions of their laws take place, without interposing at all, after they had passed them ; without a trial, and the formalities of an execution : if they were able to make their laws execute themselves, or every offender to execute them upon himself, we should be just in the same sense under their government then, as we are now ; but in a much higher degree, and more perfect manner. Vain is the ridicule with which one foresees some persons will divert themselves, upon finding lesser pains considered as instances of divine punishment. There is no possibility of answering or evading the general thing here intended, without denying all final causes. For, final causes being admitted, the pleasures and pains now mentioned must be admitted too, as instances of them. And if they are ; if God annexes delight to some actions and uneasiness to others, with an apparent design to induce us to act so and so, then he not only dispenses happiness and misery, but also rewards and punishes actions. If, for example, the pain which we feel upon doing what tends to the destruction of our bodies, suppose upon too near approaches to fire, or upon wounding ourselves, be

appointed by the Author of nature to prevent our doing what thus tends to our destruction ; this is altogether as much an instance of his punishing our actions, and consequently of our being under his government, as declaring, by a voice from heaven, that if we acted so, he would inflict such pain upon us, and inflicting it whether it be greater or less.

Thus we find, that the true notion or conception of the Author of nature, is that of a master or governor, prior to the consideration of his moral attributes. The fact of our case, which we find by experience, is, that he actually exercises dominion or government over us at present, by rewarding and punishing us for our actions, in as strict and proper a sense of these words, and even in the same sense as children, servants, subjects, are rewarded and punished by those who govern them.

And thus the whole analogy of nature, the whole present course of things, most fully shows, that there is nothing incredible in the general doctrine of religion, that God will reward and punish men for their actions hereafter ; nothing incredible, I mean, arising out of the notion of rewarding and punishing, for the whole course of nature is a present instance of his exercising that government over us, which implies in it rewarding and punishing.

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But, as divine punishment is what men chiefly object against, and are most unwilling to allow, it may be proper to mention some circumstances in the natural course of punishments at present, which are analogous to what religion teaches us concerning a future state of punishment : indeed so analogous, that as they add a farther credibility to it, so they cannot but raise a most serious apprehension of it in those who will attend to them.

It has been now observed, that such and such miseries naturally follow such and such actions of imprudence and wilfulness, as well as actions more commonly and more distinctly considered as vicious ; and that these consequences, when they may be foreseen, are properly natural punishments annexed to such actions. For the general thing here insisted upon is, not that we see a great deal of misery in the world, but a great deal which men bring upon themselves by their own behaviour, which they might have foreseen and avoided. Now, the cir-

cumstances of these natural punishments, particularly deserving our attention, are such as these : That oftentimes they follow, or are inflicted in consequence of actions which procure many present advantages, and are accompanied with much present pleasure ; for instance, sickness and untimely death is the consequence of intemperance, though accompanied with the highest mirth and jollity : That these punishments are often much greater than the advantages or pleasures obtained by the actions, of which they are the punishments or consequences : That though we may imagine a constitution of nature, in which these natural punishments, which are in fact to follow, would follow immediately upon such actions being done, or very soon after ; we find, on the contrary, in our world, that they are often delayed a great while, sometimes even till long after the actions occasioning them are forgot ; so that the constitution of nature is such, that delay of punishment is no sort nor degree of presumption of final impunity : That, after such delay, these natural punishments or miseries often come, not by degrees, but suddenly, with violence, and at once ; however, the chief misery often does : That as certainty of such distant misery following such actions is never afforded persons, so, perhaps, during the actions, they have seldom a distinct full expectation of its following, (see Part II. ch. vi. :) and many times the case is only thus, that they see in general, or may see, the credibility, that intemperance, suppose, will bring after it diseases ; civil crimes, civil punishments ; when yet the real probability often is, that they shall escape ; but things notwithstanding take their destined course, and the misery inevitably follows at its appointed time, in very many of these cases. Thus, also, though youth may be alleged as an excuse for rashness and folly, as being naturally thoughtless, and not clearly foreseeing all the consequences of being untractable and profligate ; this does not hinder but that these consequences follow, and are grievously felt, throughout the whole course of mature life. Habits contracted, even in that age, are often utter ruin ; and men's success in the world, not only in the common sense of worldly success, but their real happiness and misery depends, in a great degree, and in various ways, upon the manner in which they pass their youth ; which consequences they, for the most part, neglect to consider, and perhaps seldom can properly be said to believe beforehand. It requires also to be mentioned, that, in numberless cases, the natural course of things affords us opportunities for procuring advantages to ourselves at certain times, which we cannot procure when we will ;



nor ever recal the opportunities, if we have neglected them. Indeed, the general course of nature is an example of this. If, during the opportunity of youth, persons are indocile and self-willed, they inevitably suffer in their future life, for want of those acquirements which they neglected the natural season of attaining. If the husbandman lets his seed-time pass without sowing, the whole year is lost to him beyond recovery. In like manner, though after men have been guilty of folly and extravagance, *up to a certain degree*, it is often in their power, for instance, to retrieve their affairs, to recover their health and character, at least in good measure; yet real reformation is, in many cases, of no avail at all towards preventing the miseries, poverty, sickness, infamy, naturally annexed to folly and extravagance, *exceeding that degree*. There is a certain bound to imprudence and misbehaviour, which being transgressed, there remains no place for repentance in the natural course of things. It is, further, very much to be remarked, that neglects from inconsiderateness, want of attention, (Part II. ch. vi.) not looking about us to see what we have to do, are often attended with consequences altogether as dreadful as any active misbehaviour, from the most extravagant passion. And, lastly, civil government being natural, the punishments of it are so too; and some of these punishments are capital, as the effects of a dissolute course of pleasure are often mortal. So that many natural punishments are final\* to him who incurs them, if considered only in his temporal capacity; and seem inflicted by natural appointment, either to remove the offender out of the way of being further

\* The general consideration of a future state of punishment most evidently belongs to the subject of natural religion. But if any of these reflections should be thought to relate more peculiarly to this doctrine, as taught in Scripture, the reader is desired to observe, that Gentile writers, both moralists and poets, speak of the future punishment of the wicked, both as to the duration and degree of it, in a like manner of expression and of description as the Scripture does. So that all which can positively be asserted to be matter of mere revelation, with regard to this doctrine, seems to be, that the great distinction between the righteous and the wicked shall be made at the end of this world; that each shall *then* receive according to his deserts. Reason did, as it well might, conclude, that it should finally and upon the whole be well with the righteous, and ill with the wicked; but it could not be determined, upon any principles of reason, whether human creatures might not have been appointed to pass through other states of life and being, before that distributive justice should finally and effectually take place. Revelation teaches us, that the next state of things, after the present, is appointed for the execution of this justice; that it shall be no longer delayed; but *the mystery of God*, the great mystery of his suffering vice and confusion to prevail, *shall then be finished*; and he will *take to him his great power, and will reign, by rendering to every one according to his works*.



mischievous, or as an example, though frequently a disregarded one, to those who are left behind.

These things are not what we call accidental, or to be met with only now and then ; but they are things of every day's experience ; they proceed from general laws, very general ones, by which God governs the world, in the natural course of his providence. And they are so analogous to what religion teaches us concerning the future punishment of the wicked, so much of a piece with it, that both would naturally be expressed in the very same words and manner of description. In the book of Proverbs, (ch. i.) for instance, Wisdom is introduced as frequenting the most public places of resort, and as rejected when she offers herself as the natural appointed guide of human life. " How long," speaking to those who are passing through it, " how long, ye simple ones, will ye love folly, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge ? Turn ye at my reproof. Behold, I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words unto you." But upon being neglected, " Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me." This passage, every one sees, is poetical, and some parts of it are highly figurative ; but their meaning is obvious. And the thing intended is expressed more literally in the following words : " For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord ; therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the security of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them." And the whole passage is so equally applicable to what we experience in the present world, concerning the consequences of men's actions, and to what religion teaches us is to be expected in another, that it may be questioned which of the two was principally intended.

Indeed, when one has been recollecting the proper proofs of a future state of rewards and punishments, nothing, methinks, can give one so sensible an apprehension of the latter, or representation of it to the mind, as observing, that after the many disregarded checks, admonitions, and warnings, which

set with in the ways of vice, and folly, and extravagances from their very nature ; from the examples ; from the lesser inconveniences which they bring on themselves ; from the instructions of wise and virtuous men these have been long despised, scorned, ridiculed ; chief bad consequences, temporal consequences, of sins, have been delayed for a great while ; at length they break in irresistibly, like an armed force ; repentance is no relieve, and can serve only to aggravate their distress : the case is become desperate ; and poverty and sickness, and anguish, infamy and death, the effects of their sins, overwhelm them beyond possibility of remedy or relief. This is an account of what is in fact the general condition of nature.

It is in any sort meant, that according to what appears at the natural course of things, men are always uniformly in proportion to their misbehaviour ; but that there are many instances of misbehaviour punished in the several worlds mentioned, and very dreadful instances too, sufficient to show that the laws of the universe may admit ; and, if they are fully considered, sufficient fully to answer all objections to the credibility of a future state of punishments, from the frailty of our nature and external influences almost annihilate the guilt of human vices ; as objections of another sort ; from necessity ; from supposing that the will of an infinite Being cannot be contradicted ; that he must be incapable of offence and provocation. (v. and vi.)

Reasonings of this kind are not without their terrors to persons, the most free from enthusiasm, and of the strongest of mind : but it is fit things be stated and felt as they really are. And there is, in the present universal fearlessness with regard to what may be hereafter the government of God, which nothing but an universal acknowledged demonstration on the side of atheism can account for, and which makes it quite necessary that men be reminded, if possible, made to feel, that there is no sort of impunity for being thus presumptuous, even upon the most sceptical principles. For, may it not be said of any person, upon his being born into the world, he may behave so as to be of no use to himself, but by being made an example of the woful effects of sin and folly ? That he may, as any one may, if he will, suffer an infamous execution from the hands of civil justice ; or that he may be the subject of some other course of extravagance shorten his days ; or

bring upon himself infamy and diseases worse than death ? So that it had been better for him, even with regard to the present world, that he had never been born. And is there any pretence of reason for people to think themselves secure, and talk as if they had certain proof, that, let them act as licentiously as they will, there can be nothing analogous to this, with regard to a future and more general interest, under the providence and government of the same God ?

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### CHAP. III.

#### OF THE MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD.

As the manifold appearances of design and of final causes, in the constitution of the world, prove it to be the work of an intelligent mind, so the particular final causes of pleasure and pain, distributed amongst his creatures, prove that they are under his government ; what may be called his natural government of creatures, endued with sense and reason. This, however, implies somewhat more than seems usually attended to, when we speak of God's natural government of the world. It implies government of the very same kind with that which a master exercises over his servants, or a civil magistrate over his subjects. These latter instances of final causes as really prove an intelligent *Governor* of the world, in the sense now mentioned, and before (ch. ii.) distinctly treated of, as any other instances of final causes prove an intelligent *Maker* of it.

But this alone does not appear, at first sight, to determine any thing certainly, concerning the moral character of the Author of nature, considered in this relation of governor ; does not ascertain his government to be moral, or prove that he is the righteous Judge of the world. Moral government consists, not barely in rewarding and punishing men for their actions, which the most tyrannical person may do ; but in rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked ; in rendering to men according to their actions, considered as good or evil. And the perfection of moral government consists in doing this, with regard to all intelligent creatures, in an exact proportion to their personal merits or demerits.

Some men seem to think the only character of the Author

nature to be that of simple absolute benevolence. This, considered as a principle of action and infinite in degree, is a position to produce the greatest possible happiness, without regard to persons' behaviour, otherwise than as such regard would produce higher degrees of it. And supposing this to be the only character of God, veracity and justice in him would be nothing but benevolence conducted by wisdom. Now surely it ought not to be asserted, unless it can be proved; for we should speak with cautious reverence upon such a subject. And whether it can be proved or no, is not the thing here to be inquired into; but whether, in the constitution and conduct of the world, a righteous government be not discernibly planned; which necessarily implies a righteous governor. There may possibly be in the creation beings, to whom the Author of nature manifests himself under this most amiable of all characters, this of infinite absolute benevolence; for it is the most amiable, supposing it not, as perhaps it is not, incompatible with justice: but he manifests himself to us under the character of a righteous governor. He may, consistently with this, be simply and absolutely benevolent, in the sense now explained; but he is, for he has given us a proof in the constitution and conduct of the world that he is, a governor over his servants, as he rewards and punishes us for our actions. And in the constitution and conduct of it, he may also have given, besides the reason of the thing, and the natural presages of science, clear and distinct intimations, that his government is righteous or moral: clear to such as think the nature of it deserves their attention; and yet not to every careless person who casts a transient reflection upon the subject.\*

But it is particularly to be observed, that the divine government, which we experience ourselves under in the present state, taken alone, is allowed not to be the perfection of moral government. And yet this by no means hinders, but that there may be somewhat, be it more or less, truly moral in it. A righteous government may plainly appear to be carried on to some degree; enough to give us the apprehension that it shall

\* The objections against religion, from the evidence of it not being universal, nor so strong as might possibly have been, may be urged against natural religion, as well as against revealed. And therefore the consideration of them belongs to the first part of this Treatise, as well as the second. But these objections are chiefly urged against revealed religion, I chose to consider them in the second Part. And the answer to them there, Chap. vi. urged against Christianity, being almost equally applicable to them as urged against the Religion of Nature, to avoid repetition, the reader is referred to that chapter.

be completed, or carried on to that degree of perfection which religion teaches us it shall ; but which cannot appear, till much more of the divine administration be seen, than can in the present life. And the design of this chapter is to inquire, how far this is the case ; how far, over and above the moral nature (Diss. ii.) which God has given us, and our natural notion of him, as righteous governor of those his creatures to whom he has given this nature ; (Ch. vi.) I say how far, besides this, the principles and beginnings of a moral government over the world may be discerned, notwithstanding and amidst all the confusion and disorder of it.

Now one might mention here, what has been often urged with great force, that, in general, less uneasiness, and more satisfaction, are the natural consequences\* of a virtuous than of a vicious course of life, in the present state, as an instance of a moral government established in nature ; an instance of it, collected from experience and present matter of fact. But it must be owned a thing of difficulty to weigh and balance pleasures and uneasinesses, each amongst themselves, and also against each other, so as to make an estimate with any exactness, of the overplus of happiness on the side of virtue. And it is not impossible, that, amidst the infinite disorders of the world, there may be exceptions to the happiness of virtue, even with regard to those persons whose course of life, from their youth up, has been blameless ; and more with regard to those, who have gone on for some time in the ways of vice, and have afterwards reformed. For suppose an instance of the latter case ; a person with his passions inflamed, his natural faculty of self-government impaired by habits of indulgence, and with all his vices about him, like so many harpies, craving for their accustomed gratification : who can say how long it might be before such a person would find more satisfaction in the reasonableness and present good consequences of virtue, than difficulties and self-denial in the restraints of it ? Experience also shows, that men can, to a great degree, get over their sense of shame, so as that, by professing themselves to be without principle, and avowing even direct villany, they can support themselves against the infamy of it. But as the ill actions of any one will probably be more talked of, and oftener thrown in his way, upon his reformation ; so the infamy of them will be much more felt, after the natural sense of virtue and of honour is recovered. Uneasinesses of this kind ought indeed to be put to

\* See Lord Shaftesbury's Inquiry concerning Virtue, Part 2.

the account of former vices ; yet it will be said, they are in part the consequences of reformation. Still I am far from allowing it doubtful, whether virtue, upon the whole, be happier than vice in the present world ; but if it were, yet the beginnings of a righteous administration may, beyond all question, be found in nature, if we will attentively inquire after them. And,

I. In whatever manner the notion of God's moral government over the world might be treated, if it did not appear whether he were, in a proper sense, our governor at all ; yet when it is certain matter of experience, that he does manifest himself to us under the character of a governor, in the sense explained, (Ch. ii.) it must deserve to be considered, whether there be not reason to apprehend, that he may be a righteous or moral governor. Since it appears to be fact, that God does govern mankind by the method of rewards and punishments, according to some settled rules of distribution, it is surely a question to be asked, What presumption is there against his finally rewarding and punishing them according to this particular rule, namely, as they act reasonably or unreasonably, virtuously or viciously ? since rendering men happy or miserable by this rule, certainly falls in, much more falls in, with our natural apprehensions and sense of things, than doing so by any other rule whatever ; since rewarding and punishing actions by any other rule, would appear much harder to be accounted for by minds formed as he has formed ours. Be the evidence of religion, then, more or less clear, the expectation which it raises in us, that the righteous shall, upon the whole, be happy, and the wicked miserable, cannot, however, possibly be considered as absurd or chimerical ; because it is no more than an expectation, that a method of government, already begun, shall be carried on, the method of rewarding and punishing actions ; and shall be carried on by a particular rule, which unavoidably appears to us, at first sight, more natural than any other, the rule which we call distributive justice. Nor,

II. Ought it to be entirely passed over, that tranquillity, satisfaction, and external advantages, being the natural consequences of prudent management of ourselves and our affairs ; and rashness, profligate negligence, and wilful folly, bringing after them many inconveniences and sufferings ; these afford instances of a right constitution of nature : as the correction of children, for their own sakes, and by way of example, when

they run into danger or hurt themselves, is a part of right education. And thus, that God governs the world by general fixed laws; that he has endued us with capacities of reflecting upon this constitution of things, and foreseeing the good and bad consequences of our behaviour, plainly implies some sort of moral government: since from such a constitution of things it cannot but follow, that prudence and imprudence, which are of the nature of virtue and vice, (see Diss. ii.) must be, as they are, respectively rewarded and punished.

III. From the natural course of things, vicious actions are, to a great degree, actually punished as mischievous to society: and besides punishment actually inflicted upon this account, there is also the fear and apprehension of it in those persons whose crimes have rendered them obnoxious to it in case of a discovery; this state of fear being itself often a very considerable punishment. The natural fear and apprehension of it too, which restrains from such crimes, is a declaration of nature against them. It is necessary to the very being of society, that vices destructive of it should be punished *as being so*; the vices of falsehood, injustice, cruelty: which punishment, therefore, is as natural as society, and so is an instance of a kind of moral government, naturally established, and actually taking place. And, since the certain natural course of things is the conduct of Providence or the government of God, though carried on by the instrumentality of men, the observation here made amounts to this, that mankind find themselves placed by him in such circumstances, as that they are unavoidably accountable for their behaviour, and are often punished, and sometimes rewarded, under his government, in the view of their being mischievous or eminently beneficial to society.

If it be objected, that good actions, and such as are beneficial to society, are often punished, as in the case of persecution, and in other cases, and that ill and mischievous actions are often rewarded; it may be answered distinctly, first, that this is in no sort necessary, and consequently not natural in the sense in which it is necessary, and therefore natural, that ill or mischievous actions should be punished; and, in the next place, that good actions are never punished, considered as beneficial to society, nor ill actions rewarded, under the view of their being hurtful to it. So that it stands good, without any thing on the side of vice to be set over against it, that the Author of nature has as truly directed that vicious actions, considered as mischievous to society, should be punished, and put



mankind under a necessity of thus punishing them, as he has directed and necessitated us to preserve our lives by food.

IV. In the natural course of things, virtue, *as such*, is actually rewarded, and vice, *as such*, punished; which seems to afford an instance, or example, not only of government, but of moral government begun and established; moral in the strictest sense, though not in that perfection of degree which religion teaches us to expect. In order to see this more clearly, we must distinguish between actions themselves, and that quality ascribed to them, which we call virtuous or vicious. The gratification itself of every natural passion must be attended with delight; and acquisitions of fortune, however made, are acquisitions of the means or materials of enjoyment. An action, then, by which any natural passion is gratified, or fortune acquired, procures delight or advantage, abstracted from all consideration of the morality of such action. Consequently, the pleasure or advantage in this case is gained by the action itself, not by the morality, the virtuousness or viciousness of it, though it be, perhaps, virtuous or vicious. Thus, to say such an action, or course of behaviour, procured such pleasure or advantage, or brought on such inconvenience and pain, is quite a different thing from saying, that such good or bad effect was owing to the virtue or vice of such action or behaviour. In one case, an action, abstracted from all moral consideration, produced its effect; in the other case, for it will appear that there are such cases, the morality of the action, the action under a moral consideration, *i. e.* the virtuousness or viciousness of it, produced the effect. Now I say, virtue, *as such*, naturally procures considerable advantages to the virtuous, and vice, *as such*, naturally occasions great inconvenience, and even misery, to the vicious, in very many instances. The immediate effects of virtue and vice upon the mind and temper are to be mentioned as instances of it. Vice, *as such*, is naturally attended with some sort of uneasiness, and not uncommonly with great disturbance and apprehension. That inward feeling which, respecting lesser matters, and in familiar speech we call being vexed with one's self, and in matters of importance, and in more serious language, remorse, is an uneasiness naturally arising from an action of a man's own, reflected upon by himself as wrong, unreasonable, faulty, *i. e.* vicious in greater or less degrees; and this manifestly is a different feeling from that uneasiness which arises from a sense of mere loss or harm. What is more common than to hear a man lamenting an ac-



cident or event, and adding,—But however, he has the satisfaction that he cannot blame himself for it ; or, on the contrary, that he has the uneasiness of being sensible it was his own doing ? Thus also, the disturbance and fear which often follow upon a man's having done an injury, arise from a sense of his being blameworthy ; otherwise there would, in many cases, be no ground of disturbance, nor any reason to fear resentment or shame. On the other hand, inward security and peace, and a mind open to the several gratifications of life, are the natural attendants of innocence and virtue ; to which must be added, the complacency, satisfaction, and even joy of heart, which accompany the exercise, the real exercise, of gratitude, friendship, benevolence.

And here, I think, ought to be mentioned, the fears of future punishment, and peaceful hopes of a better life, in those who fully believe or have any serious apprehension of religion ; because these hopes and fears are present uneasiness and satisfaction to the mind, and cannot be got rid of by great part of the world, even by men who have thought most thoroughly upon the subject of religion. And no one can say how considerable this uneasiness and satisfaction may be, or what, upon the whole, it may amount to.

In the next place comes in the consideration, that all honest and good men are disposed to befriend honest good men, as such, and to discountenance the vicious, as such, and to do so in some degree, indeed in a considerable degree ; from which favour and discouragement cannot but arise considerable advantage and inconvenience. And though the generality of the world have little regard to the morality of their own actions, and may be supposed to have less to that of others, when they themselves are not concerned ; yet, let any one be known to be a man of virtue, somehow or other he will be favoured, and good offices will be done him from regard to his character, without remote views, occasionally, and in some low degree, I think, by the generality of the world, as it happens to come in their way. Public honours, too, and advantages, are the natural consequences, are sometimes at least the consequences, in fact, of virtuous actions, of eminent justice, fidelity, charity, love to our country, considered in the view of being virtuous. And sometimes even death itself, often infamy and external inconveniences, are the public consequences of vice, as vice. For instance, the sense which mankind have of tyranny, injustice, oppression, additional to the mere feeling or fear of misery, has doubtless been instrumental in bringing about revolutions, which make a figure

even in the history of the world. For it is plain, men resent injuries as implying faultiness, and retaliate, not merely under the notion of having received harm, but of having received wrong; and they have this resentment in behalf of others, as well as of themselves. So, likewise, even the generality are, in some degree, grateful and disposed to return good offices, not merely because such an one has been the occasion of good to them, but under the view that such good offices implied kind intention and good desert in the doer. To all this may be added two or three particular things, which many persons will think frivolous; but to me nothing appears so, which at all comes in towards determining a question of such importance, as whether there be or be not a moral institution of government, in the strictest sense moral, *visibly* established and begun in nature. The particular things are these: That in domestic government, which is doubtless natural, children, and others also, are very generally punished for falsehood, and injustice, and ill-behaviour, as such, and rewarded for the contrary; which are instances where veracity, and justice, and right behaviour, as such, are naturally enforced by rewards and punishments, whether more or less considerable in degree: That though civil government be supposed to take cognizance of actions in no other view than as prejudicial to society, without respect to the immorality of them, yet as such actions are immoral, so the sense which men have of the immorality of them very greatly contributes, in different ways, to bring offenders to justice: and that entire absence of all crime and guilt, in the moral sense, when plainly appearing, will almost of course procure, and circumstances of aggravated guilt prevent, a remission of the penalties annexed to civil crimes in many cases, though by no means in all.

Upon the whole, then, besides the good and bad effects of virtue and vice upon men's own minds, the course of the world does, in some measure, turn upon the approbation and disapprobation of them, as such, in others. The sense of well and ill-doing, the presages of conscience, the love of good characters and dislike of bad ones, honour, shame, resentment, gratitude; all these, considered in themselves, and in their effects, do afford manifest real instances of virtue, as such, naturally favoured, and of vice, as such, discountenanced, more or less, in the daily course of human life; in every age, in every relation, in every general circumstance of it. That God has given us a moral nature, (see Diss. ii.) may most justly be urged as a proof of our being under his moral government; but that he has placed

us in a condition, which gives this nature, as one may speak, scope to operate, and in which it does unavoidably operate, *i. e.* influence mankind to act, so as thus to favour and reward virtue, and discountenance and punish vice ; this is not the same, but a further additional proof of his moral government, for it is an instance of it. The first is a proof that he will finally favour and support virtue effectually ; the second is an example of his favouring and supporting it at present, in some degree.

If a more distinct inquiry be made, whence it arises, that virtue, as such, is often rewarded, and vice, as such, is punished, and this rule never inverted ; it will be found to proceed, in part, immediately from the moral nature itself which God has given us ; and also, in part, from his having given us, together with this nature, so great a power over each other's happiness and misery. For, *first*, it is certain, that peace and delight, in some degree and upon some occasions, is the necessary and present effect of virtuous practice ; an effect arising immediately from that constitution of our nature. We are so made, that well-doing, as such, gives us satisfaction, at least, in some instances ; ill-doing, as such, in none. And, *secondly*, from our moral nature, joined with God's having put our happiness and misery, in many respects, in each other's power, it cannot but be that vice, as such, some kinds and instances of it at least, will be infamous, and men will be disposed to punish it as in itself detestable ; and the villain will by no means be able always to avoid feeling that infamy, any more than he will be able to escape this further punishment which mankind will be disposed to inflict upon him, under the notion of his deserving it. But there can be nothing on the side of vice to answer this ; because there is nothing in the human mind contradictory, as the logicians speak, to virtue. For virtue consists in a regard to what is right and reasonable, as being so ; in a regard to veracity, justice, charity, in themselves : and there is surely no such thing as a like natural regard to falsehood, injustice, cruelty. If it be thought that there are instances of an approbation of vice, as such, in itself, and for its own sake, (though it does not appear to me that there are any such thing at all ; but, supposing there be,) it is evidently monstrous ; as much so as the most acknowledged perversion of any passion whatever. Such instances of perversion, then, being left out as merely imaginary, or, however, unnatural ; it must follow, from the frame of our nature, and from our condition, in the respects now described, that vice cannot at all be, and virtue cannot but be, favoured, as such, by others, upon some occasions ; and happy

in itself, in some degree. For what is here insisted upon, is not the degree in which virtue and vice are thus distinguished, but only the thing itself, that they are so in some degree ; though the whole good or bad effect of virtue and vice, as such, is not inconsiderable in degree. But that they must be thus distinguished, in some degree, is in a manner necessary ; it is matter of fact, of daily experience, even in the greatest confusion of human affairs.

It is not pretended but that, in the natural course of things, happiness and misery appear to be distributed by other rules, than only the personal merit and demerit of characters. They may sometimes be distributed by way of mere discipline. There may be the wisest and best reasons why the world should be governed by general laws, from whence such promiscuous distribution perhaps must follow ; and also why our happiness and misery should be put in each other's power, in the degree which they are. And these things, as in general they contribute to the rewarding virtue and punishing vice, as such ; so they often contribute also, not to the inversion of this, which is impossible, but to the rendering persons prosperous though wicked, afflicted though righteous ; and, which is worse, to the *rewarding some actions*, though vicious, and *punishing other actions*, though virtuous. But all this cannot drown the voice of nature in the conduct of Providence, plainly declaring itself for virtue, by way of distinction from vice, and preference to it. For, our being so constituted as that virtue and vice are thus naturally favoured and discountenanced, rewarded and punished respectively as such, is an intuitive proof of the intent of nature that it should be so ; otherwise the constitution of our mind, from which it thus immediately and directly proceeds, would be absurd. But it cannot be said, because virtuous actions are sometimes punished, and vicious actions rewarded, that nature intended it. For, though this great disorder is brought about, as all actions are done by means of some natural passion, yet *this may be*, as it undoubtedly is, brought about by the perversion of such passion, implanted in us for other, and those very good purposes. And indeed these other and good purposes, even of every passion, may be clearly seen.

We have then a declaration, in some degree of present effect, from him who is supreme in nature, which side he is of, or what part he takes ; a declaration for virtue, and against vice. So far, therefore, as a man is true to virtue, to veracity and justice, to equity and charity, and the right of the case, in whatever he is concerned, so far he is on the side of the divine

administration, and co-operates with it; and from hence, to such a man, arises naturally a secret satisfaction and sense of security, and implicit hope of somewhat further. And,

V. This hope is confirmed by the necessary tendencies of virtue, which, though not of present effect, yet are at present discernible in nature; and so afford an instance of somewhat moral in the essential constitution of it. There is, in the nature of things, a tendency in virtue and vice to produce the good and bad effects now mentioned, in a greater degree than they do in fact produce them. For instance, good and bad men would be much more rewarded and punished as such, were it not that justice is often artificially eluded, that characters are not known, and many who would thus favour virtue and discourage vice, are hindered from doing so by accidental causes. These tendencies of virtue and vice are obvious with regard to *individuals*. But it may require more particularly to be considered, that power in a *society*, by being under the direction of virtue, naturally increases, and has a necessary tendency to prevail over opposite power, not under the direction of it; in like manner as power, by being under the direction of reason, increases, and has a tendency to prevail over brute force. There are several brute creatures of equal, and several of superior strength, to that of men; and possibly the sum of the whole strength of brutes may be greater than that of mankind: but reason gives us the advantage and superiority over them, and thus man is the acknowledged governing animal upon the earth. Nor is this superiority considered by any as accidental; but as what reason has a tendency, in the nature of the thing, to obtain. And yet perhaps, difficulties may be raised about the meaning, as well as the truth of the assertion, that virtue has the like tendency.

To obviate these difficulties, let us see more distinctly how the case stands with regard to reason, which is so readily acknowledged to have this advantageous tendency. Suppose, then, two or three men, of the best and most improved understanding, in a desolate open plain, attacked by ten times the number of beasts of prey; would their reason secure them the victory in this unequal combat? Power, then, though joined with reason, and under its direction, cannot be expected to prevail over opposite power, though merely brutal, unless the one bears some proportion to the other. Again, put the imaginary case, that rational and irrational creatures were of like external shape and manner; it is certain, before there were opportunities for

the first to distinguish each other, to separate from their adversaries, and to form an union among themselves, they might be upon a level, or, in several respects, upon great disadvantage, though, united, they might be vastly superior; since union is of such efficacy, that ten men, united, might be able to accomplish what ten thousand of the same natural strength and understanding, wholly ununited, could not. In this case, then, brute force might more than maintain its ground against reason, for want of union among the rational creatures. Or suppose a number of men to land upon an island inhabited only by wild beasts; a number of men, who, by the regulations of civil government, the inventions of art, and the experience of some years, could they be preserved so long, would be really sufficient to subdue the wild beasts, and to preserve themselves in security from them; yet a conjuncture of accidents might give such advantage to the irrational animals, as that they might at once overpower, and even extirpate, the whole species of rational ones. Length of time, then, proper scope and opportunities for reason to exert itself, may be absolutely necessary to its prevailing over brute force. Further still: there are many instances of brutes succeeding in attempts, which they could not have undertaken, had not their irrational nature rendered them incapable of foreseeing the danger of such attempts, or the fury of passion hindered their attending to it; and there are instances of reason and real prudence preventing men's undertaking what, it hath appeared afterwards, they might have succeeded in by a lucky rashness. And in certain conjunctures, ignorance and folly, weakness and discord, may have their advantages. So that rational animals have not necessarily the superiority over irrational ones; but, how improbable soever it may be, it is evidently possible, that in some globes, the latter may be superior. And were the former wholly at variance and disunited, by false self-interest and envy, by treachery and injustice, and consequent rage and malice against each other, whilst the latter were firmly united among themselves by instinct, this might greatly contribute to the introducing such an inverted order of things. For every one would consider it as inverted; since reason has, in the nature of it, a tendency to prevail over brute force, notwithstanding the possibility it may not prevail, and the necessity which there is of many concurring circumstances to render it prevalent.

Now, I say, virtue in a society has a like tendency to procure superiority and additional power, whether this power be considered as the means of security from opposite power, or of

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ing other advantages. And it has this tendency, by rendering the public good an object and end to every member of the society, by putting every one upon consideration and diligence, in the use of reason and self-government, both in order to see what is the most effectual method, and also in order to perform their part, for obtaining and preserving it; by uniting a society within itself, and so increasing its strength, and, which is particularly to be mentioned, uniting it by means of veracity and justice. For as these last are principal bonds of union, so the love of truth, or public spirit, undirected, unrestrained by them, nobody knows what.

Suppose the invisible world, and the invisible dispensation of Providence, to be in any sort analogous to what appears in the visible world, or, that both together make up one uniform scheme, of which the parts of which, the part which we see, and that which is not under our observation, are analogous to each other; then, there must be a like natural tendency in the derived power, as in the universe, under the direction of virtue, to prevail over the general over that which is not under its direction; as in reason, derived reason in the universe, to prevail over the brute force. But then, in order to the prevalence of virtue, that it may actually produce what it has a tendency to produce, the like concurrences are necessary as are to the prevalence of the other.



which we have been considering, though real, is *hindered* from being carried into effect in the present state, but these hinderances may be removed in a future one. Virtue, to borrow the Christian allusion, is militant here, and various untoward accidents contribute to its being often overborne ; but it may combat with greater advantage hereafter, and prevail completely, and enjoy its consequent rewards, in some future states. Neglected as it is, perhaps unknown, perhaps despised and oppressed here, there may be scenes in eternity, lasting enough, and in every other way adapted, to afford it a sufficient sphere of action, and a sufficient sphere for the natural consequences of it to follow in fact. If the soul be naturally immortal, and this state be a progress towards a future one, as childhood is towards mature age, good men may naturally unite, not only amongst themselves, but also with other orders of virtuous creatures, in that future state. For virtue, from the very nature of it, is a principle and bond of union, in some degree, amongst all who are endued with it, and known to each other : so as that by it a good man cannot but recommend himself to the favour and protection of all virtuous beings, throughout the whole universe, who can be acquainted with his character, and can any way interpose in his behalf in any part of his duration. And one might add, that suppose all this advantageous tendency of virtue to become effect amongst one or more orders of creatures, in any distant scenes and periods, and to be seen by any orders of vicious creatures, throughout the universal kingdom of God ; this happy effect of virtue would have a tendency, by way of example, and possibly in other ways, to amend those of them who are capable of amendment, and being recovered to a just sense of virtue. If our notions of the plan of Providence were enlarged, in any sort proportionably to what late discoveries have enlarged our views with respect to the material world, representations of this kind would not appear absurd or extravagant. However, they are not to be taken as intended for a literal delineation of what is in fact the particular scheme of the universe, which cannot be known without revelation ; for suppositions are not to be looked on as true, because not incredible, but they are mentioned to show, that our finding virtue to be hindered from procuring to itself such superiority and advantages, is no objection against its having, in the essential nature of the thing, a tendency to procure them. And the suppositions now mentioned do plainly show this ; for they show, that these hinderances are so far from being necessary, that we ourselves can easily conceive how they may be removed



in future states, and full scope be granted to virtue. And all these advantageous tendencies of it are to be considered as declarations of God in its favour. This, however, is taking a pretty large compass; though it is certain, that as the material world appears to be in a manner boundless and immense, there must be *some* scheme of Providence vast in proportion to it.

But let us return to the earth, our habitation, and we shall see this happy tendency of virtue, by imagining an instance not so vast and remote; by supposing a kingdom, or society of men upon it, perfectly virtuous, for a succession of many ages; to which, if you please, may be given a situation advantageous for universal monarchy. In such a state there would be no such thing as faction, but men of the greatest capacity would, of course, all along, have the chief direction of affairs willingly yielded to them, and they would share it among themselves without envy. Each of these would have the part assigned him to which his genius was peculiarly adapted; and others, who had not any distinguished genius, would be safe, and think themselves very happy, by being under the protection and guidance of those who had. Public determinations would really be the result of the united wisdom of the community, and they would be faithfully executed by the united strength of it. Some would in a higher way contribute, but all would in some way contribute to the public prosperity, and in it each would enjoy the fruits of his own virtue. And as injustice, whether by fraud or force, would be unknown among themselves, so they would be sufficiently secured from it in their neighbours. For cunning and false self-interest, confederacies in injustice, ever slight and accompanied with faction and intestine treachery; these, on one hand, would be found mere childish folly and weakness, when set in opposition against wisdom, public spirit, union inviolable, and fidelity on the other, allowing both a sufficient length of years to try their force. Add the general influence which such a kingdom would have over the face of the earth, by way of example particularly, and the reverence which would be paid it. It would plainly be superior to all others, and the world must gradually come under its empire; not by means of lawless violence, but partly by what must be allowed to be just conquest, and partly by other kingdoms submitting themselves voluntarily to it throughout a course of ages, and claiming its protection, one after another, in successive exigencies. The head of it would be an universal monarch, in another sense than any mortal has yet been, and the eastern style would be literally applicable to him, that *all people, nations, and lan-*

*guages, should serve him.* And though indeed our knowledge of human nature, and the whole history of mankind, shew the impossibility, without some miraculous interposition, that a number of men here on earth should unite in one society or government, in the fear of God and universal practice of virtue, and that such a government should continue so united for a succession of ages; yet, admitting or supposing this, the effect would be as now drawn out. And thus, for instance, the wonderful power and prosperity promised to the Jewish nation in the Scripture, would be, in a great measure, the consequence of what is predicted of them; that the “people should be all righteous, and inherit the land for ever;” (Isa. lx. 21.) were we to understand the latter phrase of a long continuance only, sufficient to give things time to work. The predictions of this kind, for there are many of them, cannot come to pass in the present known course of nature; but suppose them to come to pass, and then the dominion and pre-eminence promised must naturally follow, to a very considerable degree.

Consider, now, the general system of religion: that the government of the world is uniform, and one, and moral; that virtue and right shall finally have the advantage, and prevail over fraud and lawless force, over the deceits as well as the violence of wickedness, under the conduct of one supreme Governor; and from the observations above made it will appear, that God has, by our reason, given us to see a peculiar connexion in the several parts of this scheme, and a tendency towards the completion of it, arising out of the very nature of virtue; which tendency is to be considered as somewhat moral in the essential constitution of things. If any one should think all this to be of little importance, I desire him to consider what he would think, if vice had, essentially and in its nature, these advantageous tendencies, or if virtue had essentially the direct contrary ones.

But it may be objected, that notwithstanding all these natural effects, and these natural tendencies of virtue, yet things may be now going on throughout the universe, and may go on hereafter, in the same mixed way as here at present upon earth; virtue sometimes prosperous, sometimes depressed; vice sometimes punished, sometimes successful. The answer to which is, that it is not the purpose of this chapter, nor of this treatise, properly to prove God's perfect moral government over the world, or the truth of religion, but to observe what there is in the constitution and course of nature to confirm the proper proof of it, supposed to be known, and that the weight of the foregoing observations to this purpose may be thus distinctly

proved. Pleasure and pain are indeed, to a certain degree, say to a very high degree, distributed among us, without any apparent regard to the merit or demerit of characters. And were there nothing else concerning this matter, discernible in the constitution and course of nature, there would be no ground, from the constitution and course of nature, to hope or to fear, that men would be rewarded or punished hereafter, according to their deserts; which, however, it is to be remarked, implies, that even then there would be no ground, from appearances, to think that vice, upon the whole, would have the advantage, rather than that virtue would. And thus the proof of a future state of retribution would rest upon the usual known arguments for it; which are, I think, plainly unanswerable, and would be so, though there were no additional confirmation of them from the things above insisted on. But these things are a very strong confirmation of them: For,

*First*, They shew, that the Author of nature is not indifferent to virtue and vice. They amount to a declaration from him, determinate, and not to be evaded, in favour of one, and against the other: such a declaration as there is nothing to be set over against, or answer, on the part of vice. So that were a man, laying aside the proper proof of religion, to determine from the course of nature only, whether it were most probable that the righteous or the wicked would have the advantage in a future life, there can be no doubt but that he would determine the probability to be, that the former would. The course of nature, then, in the view of it now given, furnishes us with a real practical proof of the obligations of religion.

*Secondly*, When, conformably to what religion teaches us, God shall reward and punish virtue and vice, as such, so as that every one shall, upon the whole, have his deserts, this distributive justice will not be a thing different in *kind*, but only in *degree*, from what we experience in his present government. It will be that in *effect*, toward which we now see a *tendency*. It will be no more than the *completion* of that moral government, the *principles and beginning* of which have been shewn, beyond all dispute, discernible in the present constitution and course of nature. And from hence it follows,

*Thirdly*, That as, under the natural government of God, our experience of those kinds and degrees of happiness and misery, which we do experience at present, gives just ground to hope for and to fear higher degrees and other kinds of both in a future state, supposing a future state admitted; so, under his moral government, our experience that virtue and vice are,

in the manners above-mentioned, actually rewarded and punished at present, in a certain degree, gives just ground to hope and to fear, that they *may be* rewarded and punished in a degree hereafter. It is acknowledged, indeed, that this is not sufficient ground to think, that they *actually will be* rewarded and punished in a higher degree, rather than in a lower : But then,

*Lastly*, There is sufficient ground to think so, from the good and bad tendencies of virtue and vice. For these tendencies are essential, and founded in the nature of things ; whereas the hinderances to their becoming effect are, in numberless cases, not necessary, but artificial only. Now, it may be much more strongly argued, that these tendencies, as well as the actual rewards and punishments of virtue and vice, which arise directly out of the nature of things, will remain hereafter, than that the accidental hinderances of them will. And if these hinderances do not remain, those rewards and punishments cannot but be carried on much farther towards the perfection of moral government, *i. e.* the tendencies of virtue and vice will become effect ; but when, or where, or in what particular way, cannot be known at all but by revelation.

Upon the whole, there is a kind of moral government implied in God's natural government ; (page 267) virtue and vice are naturally rewarded and punished as beneficial and mischievous to society, (page 268) and rewarded and punished directly as virtue and vice. (Page 269, &c.) The notion, then, of a moral scheme of government, is not fictitious, but natural ; for it is suggested to our thoughts by the constitution and course of nature, and the execution of this scheme is actually begun, in the instances here mentioned. And these things are to be considered as a declaration of the Author of nature, for virtue, and against vice ; they give a credibility to the supposition of their being rewarded and punished hereafter, and also ground to hope and to fear, that they may be rewarded and punished in higher degrees than they are here. And as all this is confirmed, so the argument for religion, from the constitution and course of nature, is carried on farther, by observing, that there are natural tendencies, and, in innumerable cases, only artificial hinderances, to this moral scheme being carried on much farther towards perfection than it is at present, (page 274, &c.) The notion, then, of a moral scheme of government, much more perfect than what is seen, is not a fictitious, but a natural notion, for it is suggested to our thoughts by the essential tendencies of virtue and vice. And these tendencies are to be

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ed as intimations, as implicit promises and threaten-  
m the Author of nature, of much greater rewards and  
ents to follow virtue and vice than do at present.  
deed, every *natural* tendency, which is to continue,  
h is hindered from becoming effect by only *accidental*  
affords a presumption, that such tendency will some  
other become effect: a presumption in degree propor-  
to the length of the duration through which such ten-  
ill continue. And from these things together arises a  
umption, that the moral scheme of government estab-  
nature, shall be carried on much farther towards per-  
ereafter, and, I think, a presumption that it will be  
ly completed. But from these things, joined with the  
ature which God has given us, considered as given us  
arises a practical proof\* that it will be completed; a  
m fact, and therefore a distinct one from that which is  
from the eternal and unalterable relations, the fitness  
tness of actions.

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#### CHAP. IV.

lurements to wrong, or difficulties in adhering uniformly to what is right, and of the danger of miscarrying by such temptations, than the words *moral government*. A state of probation, then, as thus particularly implying in it trial, difficulties, and danger, may require to be considered distinctly by itself.

And as the moral government of God, which religion teaches us, implies, that we are in a state of trial with regard to a future world; so also his natural government over us implies, that we are in a state of trial, in the like sense, with regard to the present world. Natural government, by rewards and punishments, as much implies natural trial, as moral government does moral trial. The natural government of God here meant, (ch. ii.) consists in his annexing pleasure to some actions, and pain to others, which are in our power to do or forbear, and in giving us notice of such appointment beforehand. This necessarily implies, that he has made our happiness and misery, or our interest, to depend in part upon ourselves. And so far as men have temptations to any course of action which will probably occasion them greater temporal inconvenience and uneasiness than satisfaction, so far their temporal interest is in danger from themselves, or they are in a state of trial with respect to it. Now, people often blame others, and even themselves, for their misconduct in their temporal concerns. And we find many are greatly wanting to themselves, and miss of that natural happiness which they might have obtained in the present life; perhaps every one does in some degree. But many run themselves into great inconvenience, and into extreme distress and misery, not through incapacity of knowing better, and doing better for themselves, which would be nothing to the present purpose, but through their own fault. And these things necessarily imply temptation, and danger of miscarrying, in a greater or less degree, with respect to our worldly interest or happiness. Every one, too, without having religion in his thoughts, speaks of the hazards which young people run upon their setting out in the world; hazards from other causes than merely their ignorance, and unavoidable accidents. And some courses of vice, at least, being contrary to men's worldly interest or good, temptations to these must at the same time be temptations to forego our present and our future interest. Thus, in our natural or temporal capacity, we are in a state of trial, *i. e.* of difficulty and danger, analogous or like to our moral and religious trial.

This will more distinctly appear to any one, who thinks it worth while, more distinctly, to consider, what it is which con-

stitutes our trial in both capacities, and to observe how mankind behave under it.

And that which constitutes this our trial, in both these capacities, must be somewhat either in our external circumstances, or in our nature. For, on the one hand, persons may be betrayed into wrong behaviour upon surprise, or overcome upon any other very singular and extraordinary external occasions, who would otherwise have preserved their character of prudence and of virtue; in which cases, every one, in speaking of the wrong behaviour of these persons, would impute it to such particular external circumstances. And, on the other hand, men who have contracted habits of vice and folly of any kind, or have some particular passions in excess, will seek opportunities, and, as it were, go out of their way, to gratify themselves in these respects, at the expense of their wisdom and their virtue; led to it, as every one would say, not by external temptations, but by such habits and passions. And the account of this last case is, that particular passions are no more coincident with prudence, or that reasonable self-love, the end of which is our worldly interest, than they are with the principle of virtue and religion, but often draw contrary ways to one as well as to the other; and so such particular passions are as much temptations to act imprudently with regard to our worldly interest, as to act viciously.\* However, as when we say, men are misled by external circumstances of temptation, it cannot but be understood, that there is somewhat within themselves to render those circumstances temptations, or to render them susceptible of impressions from them; so, when we say they are misled by passions, it is always supposed, that there are occasions, circumstances, and objects, exciting these passions, and affording means for gratifying them. And, therefore, temptations from within, and from without, coincide, and mutually imply each other. Now, the several external objects of the appetites, passions, and affections, being present to the senses, or offering themselves to the mind, and so exciting emotions suitable to their nature, not only in cases where they can be gratified consistently with innocence and prudence, but also in cases where they cannot, and yet can be gratified imprudently and viciously; this as really puts them in danger of voluntarily foregoing their present interest or good, as their future, and as really renders self-denial

\* See Sermons preached at the Rolls, 1726, 2d edit. p. 205, &c. Pref. p. 25. &c. Sermon. p. 21, &c.



necessary to secure one as the other ; *i. e.* we are in a like state of trial with respect to both, by the very same passions, excited by the very same means. Thus, mankind having a temporal interest depending upon themselves, and a prudent course of behaviour being necessary to secure it, passions inordinately excited, whether by means of example or by any other external circumstance, towards such objects, at such times, or in such degrees, as that they cannot be gratified consistently with worldly prudence, are temptations dangerous, and too often successful temptations, to forego a greater temporal good for a less ; *i. e.* to forego what is, upon the whole, our temporal interest, for the sake of a present gratification. This is a description of our state of trial in our temporal capacity. Substitute now the word *future* for *temporal*, and *virtue* for *prudence*, and it will be just as proper a description of our state of trial in our religious capacity ; so analogous are they to each other.

If, from consideration of this our like state of trial in both capacities, we go on to observe farther, how mankind behave under it, we shall find there are some who have so little sense of it, that they scarce look beyond the passing day ; they are so taken up with present gratifications, as to have, in a manner, no feeling of consequences, no regard to their future ease or fortune in this life, any more than to their happiness in another. Some appear to be blinded and deceived by inordinate passion in their worldly concerns, as much as in religion. Others are, not deceived, but, as it were, forcibly carried away by the like passions, against their better judgment, and feeble resolutions, too, of acting better. And there are men, and truly they are not a few, who shamelessly avow, not their interest, but their mere will and pleasure, to be their law of life ; and who, in open defiance of every thing that is reasonable, will go on in a course of vicious extravagance, foreseeing, with no remorse and little fear, that it will be their temporal ruin ; and some of them, under the apprehension of the consequences of wickedness in another state : And, to speak in the most moderate way, human creatures are not only continually liable to go wrong voluntarily, but we see likewise that they often actually do so, with respect to their temporal interests, as well as with respect to religion. Thus, our difficulties and dangers, or our trials in our temporal and our religious capacity, as they proceed from the same causes, and have the same effect upon men's behaviour, are evidently analogous, and of the same kind.

It may be added, that as the difficulties and dangers of mis-carrying in our religious state of trial are greatly increased, and,



one is ready to think, in a manner wholly *made*, by the ill behaviour of others; by a wrong education, wrong in a moral sense, sometimes positively vicious; by general bad example; by the dishonest artifices which are got into business of all kinds; and, in very many parts of the world, by religion being corrupted into superstitions which indulge men in their vices; so, in like manner, the difficulties of conducting ourselves prudently in respect to our present interest, and our danger of being led aside from pursuing it, are greatly increased by a foolish education, and, after we come to mature age, by the extravagance and carelessness of others, whom we have intercourse with; and by mistaken notions, very generally prevalent, and taken up from common opinion, concerning temporal happiness, and wherein it consists. And persons, by their own negligence and folly in their temporal affairs, no less than by a course of vice, bring themselves into new difficulties, and, by habits of indulgence, become less qualified to go through them; and one irregularity after another embarrasses things to such a degree, that they know not whereabouts they are, and often makes the path of conduct so intricate and perplexed, that it is difficult to trace it out; difficult even to determine what is the prudent or the moral part. Thus, for instance, wrong behaviour in one stage of life—youth; wrong, I mean, considering ourselves only in our temporal capacity, without taking in religion; this, in several ways, increases the difficulties of right behaviour in mature age; *i. e.* puts us into a more disadvantageous state of trial in our temporal capacity.

We are an inferior part of the creation of God: There are natural appearances of our being in a state of degradation; (Part ii. ch. v.) and we certainly are in a condition which *does not seem*, by any means, the most advantageous we could imagine or desire, either in our natural or moral capacity, for securing either our present or future interest. However, this condition, low, and careful, and uncertain as it is, does not afford any just ground of complaint: For, as men may manage their temporal affairs with prudence, and so pass their days here on earth in tolerable ease and satisfaction, by a moderate degree of care; so, likewise, with regard to religion, there is no more required than what they are well able to do, and what they must be greatly wanting to themselves if they neglect. And for persons to have that put upon them which they are well able to go through, and no more, we naturally consider as an equitable thing, supposing it done by proper authority. Nor have we any more reason to complain of it, with regard to

the Author of nature, than of his not having given us other advantages, belonging to other orders of creatures.

But the thing here insisted upon is, that the state of trial which religion teaches us we are in, is rendered credible, by its being throughout uniform and of a piece with the general conduct of Providence towards us, in all other respects within the compass of our knowledge. Indeed, if mankind, considered in their natural capacity as inhabitants of this world only, found themselves, from their birth to their death, in a settled state of security and happiness, without any solicitude or thought of their own; or, if they were in no danger of being brought into inconveniences and distresses by carelessness, or the folly of passion, through bad example, the treachery of others, or the deceitful appearances of things; were this our natural condition, then it might seem strange, and be some presumption against the truth of religion, that it represents our future and more general interest, as not secure of course, but as depending upon our behaviour, and requiring recollection and self-government to obtain it. For it might be alleged, "What you say is our condition in one respect, is not in anywise of a sort with what we find, by experience, our condition is in another. Our whole present interest is secured to our hands, without any solicitude of ours, and why should not our future interest, if we have any such, be so too?" But since, on the contrary, thought and consideration, the voluntary denying ourselves many things which we desire, and a course of behaviour far from being always agreeable to us, are absolutely necessary to our acting even a common decent, and common prudent part, so as to pass with any satisfaction through the present world, and be received upon any tolerable good terms in it; since this is the case, all presumption against self-denial and attention being necessary to secure our higher interest, is removed. Had we not experience, it might, perhaps, speciously be urged, that it is improbable any thing of hazard and danger should be put upon us by an infinite Being, when every thing which is hazard and danger in our manner of conception, and will end in error, confusion, and misery, is now already certain in his foreknowledge. And, indeed, why any thing of hazard and danger should be put upon such frail creatures as we are, may well be thought a difficulty in speculation; and cannot but be so, till we know the whole, or, however, much more of the case. But still the constitution of nature is as it is. Our happiness and misery are trusted to our conduct, and made to depend upon it. Somewhat, and, in many circumstances, a great deal too, is put

upon us, either to do, or to suffer, as we choose. And all the various miseries of life, which people bring upon themselves by negligence and folly, and might have avoided by proper care, are instances of this; which miseries are, beforehand, just as contingent and undetermined as their conduct, and left to be determined by it.

These observations are an answer to the objections against the credibility of a state of trial, as implying temptations, and real danger of miscarrying with regard to our general interest, under the moral government of God; and they show, that, if we are at all to be considered in such a capacity, and as having such an interest, the general analogy of Providence must lead us to apprehend ourselves in danger of miscarrying, in different degrees, as to this interest, by our neglecting to act the proper part belonging to us in that capacity. For we have a present interest, under the government of God, which we experience upon earth. And this interest, as it is not forced upon us, so neither is it offered to our acceptance, but to our acquisition; in such sort, as that we are in danger of missing it, by means of temptations to neglect or act contrary to it; and without attention and self-denial, must and do miss of it. It is then perfectly credible, that this may be our case with respect to that chief and final good which religion proposes to us.

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## CHAP. V.

### OF A STATE OF PROBATION, AS INTENDED FOR MORAL DISCIPLINE AND IMPROVEMENT.

FROM the consideration of our being in a probation-state, of so much difficulty and hazard, naturally arises the question, how we came to be placed in it? But such a general inquiry as this would be found involved in insuperable difficulties. For, though some of these difficulties would be lessened by observing, that all wickedness is voluntary, as is implied in its very notion, and that many of the miseries of life have apparent good effects, yet when we consider other circumstances belonging to both, and what must be the consequence of the former in a life to come, it cannot but be acknowledged plain folly and presumption, to pretend to give an account of the whole reasons of this matter; the whole reasons of our being allotted

dition, out of which so much wickedness and misery, so instanced, would in fact arise. Whether it be not beyond faculties, not only to find out, but even to understand, the account of this ; or, though we should be supposed capable of understanding it, yet, whether it would be of service or advice to us to be informed of it, is impossible to say. But our present condition can in nowise be shown inconsistent with the perfect moral government of God ; so religion teaches us we were placed in it, that we might qualify ourselves, by practice of virtue, for another state, which is to follow it. This, though but a partial answer, a very partial one in answer to the inquiry now mentioned, yet is a more satisfactory answer to another, which is of real, and of the utmost importance to us to have answered—the inquiry, What is our business here ? The known end, then, why we are placed in a state of so much affliction, hazard and difficulty, is, our improvement in virtue and piety, as the requisite qualification for a future state of security and happiness.

Now, the beginning of life, considered as an education for our future age in the present world, appears plainly, at first sight, analogous to this our trial for a future one ; the former being, in our temporal capacity, what the latter is in our religious capacity. But some observations common to both of them, and a more distinct consideration of each, will more distinctly reveal the extent and force of the analogy between them ; and the credibility, which arises from hence, as well as from the nature of the thing, that the present life was intended to be a state of discipline for a future one.

. Every species of creatures is, we see, designed for a particular way of life, to which the nature, the capacities, temper and qualifications of each species, are as necessary as their external circumstances. Both come into the notion of such a way of life, or particular way of life, and are constituent parts of it. We may change a man's capacities or character to the degree in which it is conceivable they may be changed, and he would be altogether incapable of a human course of life and human happiness : as incapable, as if, his nature continuing unchanged, he were placed in a world where he had no sphere of action, nor objects to answer his appetites, passions, and affections of that sort. One thing is set over against another, as an ancient proverb expresses it. Our nature corresponds to our external condition. Without this correspondence, there would be no possibility of any such thing as human life and human happiness.

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rich life and happiness are, therefore, a *result* from our condition jointly ; meaning by human life, not the literal sense, but the whole complex notion comprehended by those words. So that, without determining what will be the employment and happiness, the particular good men hereafter, there must be some determinate ends, some necessary character and qualifications, without which persons cannot but be utterly incapable of it ; in like manner as there must be some, without which men would be incapable of their present state of life. Now,

the constitution of human creatures, and indeed of all creatures which come under our notice, is such, as that they are capable of naturally becoming qualified for states of life, which they were once wholly unqualified. In imagination we can indeed conceive of creatures, as incapable of having their faculties naturally enlarged, or as being unable to acquire any new qualifications ; but the faculties of the species known to us are made for enlargement, for accretions of experience and habits. We find ourselves, in fact, endued with capacities, not only of perceiving ideas, and knowledge or perceiving truth, but also of storing up what we see and knowledge by memory. We are capable, not

and it seems as if all other associations of ideas, not naturally connected, might be called passive habits, as properly as our readiness in understanding languages upon sight, or hearing of words. And our readiness in speaking and writing them is an instance of the latter, of active habits. For distinctness, we may consider habits as belonging to the body, or the mind, and the latter will be explained by the former. Under the former are comprehended all bodily activities or motions, whether graceful or unbecoming, which are owing to use; under the latter, general habits of life and conduct, such as those of obedience and submission to authority, or to any particular person; those of veracity, justice, and charity; those of attention, industry, self-government, envy, revenge. And habits of this latter kind seem produced by repeated acts, as well as the former. And in like manner, as habits belonging to the body are produced by external acts, so habits of the mind are produced by the exertion of inward practical principles; *i. e.* by carrying them into act, or acting upon them, the principles of obedience, of veracity, justice, and charity. Nor can those habits be formed by any external course of action, otherwise than as it proceeds from these principles; because it is only these inward principles exerted, which are strictly acts of obedience, of veracity, of justice, and of charity. So, likewise, habits of attention, industry, self-government, are, in the same manner, acquired by exercise; and habits of envy and revenge by indulgence, whether in outward act or in thought and intention, *i. e.* inward act; for such intention is an act. Resolutions also to do well are properly acts: And endeavouring to enforce upon our own minds a practical sense of virtue, or to suggest in others that practical sense of it which a man really has himself, is a virtuous act. All these, therefore, may and will contribute towards forming good habits. But, going over the theory of virtue in one's thoughts, talking well, and drawing fine pictures of it, this is so far from necessarily or certainly conducing to form an habit of it in him who thus employs himself, that it may harden the mind in a contrary course, and render it gradually more insensible, *i. e.* form an habit of insensibility to all moral considerations. For, from our very faculty of habits, passive impressions, by being repeated, grow weaker. Thoughts, by often passing through the mind, are felt less sensibly; being accustomed to danger, begets intrepidity, *i. e.* lessens fear; to distress, lessens the action of pity; to instances of others' mortality, lessens the sensible apprehension of our own. And from these two ob-

servations together, that practical habits are formed and strengthened by repeated acts, and that passive impressions grow weaker by being repeated upon us, it must follow that active habits may be gradually forming and strengthening, by a course of acting upon such and such motives and excitements, whilst these motives and excitements themselves are, by proportionable degrees, growing less sensible; *i. e.* are continually less and less sensibly felt, even as the active habits strengthen. And experience confirms this; for active principles, at the very time that they are less lively in perception than they were, are found to be somehow wrought more thoroughly into the temper and character, and become more effectual in influencing our practice. The three things just mentioned may afford instances of it. Perception of danger is a natural excitement of passive fear and active caution; and, by being inured to danger, habits of the latter are gradually wrought, at the same time that the former gradually lessens. Perception of distress in others is a natural excitement, passively to pity, and actively to relieve it; but let a man set himself to attend to, inquire out, and relieve distressed persons, and he cannot but grow less and less sensibly affected with the various miseries of life, with which he must become acquainted; when yet, at the same time, benevolence, considered not as a passion, but as a practical principle of action, will strengthen; and, whilst he passively compassionates the distressed less, he will acquire a greater aptitude actively to assist and befriend them. So also, at the same time that the daily instances of men's dying around us give us daily a less sensible passive feeling or apprehension of our own mortality, such instances greatly contribute to the strengthening a practical regard to it in serious men; *i. e.* to forming an habit of acting with a constant view to it. And this seems again further to show, that passive impressions made upon our minds by admonition, experience, example, though they may have a remote efficacy, and a very great one, towards forming active habits, yet can have this efficacy no otherwise than by inducing us to such a course of action; and that it is, not being affected so and so, but acting, which forms those habits; only it must be always remembered, that real endeavours to enforce good impressions upon ourselves, are a species of virtuous action. Nor do we know how far it is possible, in the nature of things, that effects should be wrought in us at once equivalent to habits, *i. e.* what is wrought by use and exercise. However, the thing insisted upon is, not what may be possible, but what is in fact the appointment of nature,



which is, that active habits are to be formed by exercise. Their progress may be so gradual as to be imperceptible in its steps ; it may be hard to explain the faculty by which we are capable of habits, throughout its several parts, and to trace it up to its original, so as to distinguish it from all others in our mind ; and it seems as if contrary effects were to be ascribed to it. But the thing in general, that our nature is formed to yield, in some such manner as this, to use and exercise, is matter of certain experience.

Thus, by accustoming ourselves to any course of action, we get an aptness to go on, a facility, readiness, and often pleasure in it. The inclinations which rendered us averse to it grow weaker ; the difficulties in it, not only the imaginary, but the real ones, lessen ; the reasons for it offer themselves of course to our thoughts upon all occasions ; and the least glimpse of them is sufficient to make us go on in a course of action to which we have been accustomed. And practical principles appear to grow stronger absolutely in themselves, by exercise, as well as relatively, with regard to contrary principles ; which, by being accustomed to submit, do so habitually, and of course. And thus a new character, in several respects, may be formed ; and many habitudes of life, not given by nature, but which nature directs us to acquire.

III. Indeed we may be assured, that we should never have had these capacities of improving by experience, acquired knowledge and habits, had they not been necessary, and intended to be made use of. And, accordingly, we find them so necessary, and so much intended, that without them we should be utterly incapable of that which was the end for which we were made, considered in our temporal capacity only ; the employments and satisfactions of our mature state of life.

Nature does in nowise qualify us wholly, much less at once, for this mature state of life. Even maturity of understanding and bodily strength are not only arrived to gradually, but are also very much owing to the continued exercise of our powers of body and mind from infancy. But if we suppose a person brought into the world with both these in maturity, as far as this is conceivable, he would plainly at first be as unqualified for the human life of mature age, as an idiot. He would be in a manner distracted with astonishment, and apprehension, and curiosity, and suspense ; nor can one guess how long it would be before he would be familiarized to himself, and the objects about him, enough even to set himself to any thing.



It may be questioned too, whether the natural information of his sight and hearing would be of any manner of use at all to him in acting, before experience. And it seems that men would be strangely headstrong and self-willed, and disposed to exert themselves with an impetuosity which would render society insupportable, and the living in it impracticable, were it not for some acquired moderation and self-government, some aptitude and readiness in restraining themselves, and concealing their sense of things. Want of every thing of this kind which is learned, would render a man as incapable of society as want of language would ; or as his natural ignorance of any of the particular employments of life, would render him incapable of providing himself with the common conveniences, or supplying the necessary wants of it. In these respects, and probably in many more, of which we have no particular notion, mankind is left by nature an unformed, unfinished creature, utterly deficient and unqualified, before the acquirement of knowledge, experience, and habits, for that mature state of life, which was the end of his creation, considering him as related only to this world.

But then, as nature has endued us with a power of supplying those deficiencies, by acquired knowledge, experience, and habits ; so, likewise, we are placed in a condition, in infancy, childhood, and youth, fitted for it ; fitted for our acquiring those qualifications of all sorts, which we stand in need of in mature age. Hence children, from their very birth, are daily growing acquainted with the objects about them, with the scene in which they are placed, and to have a future part ; and learning somewhat or other, necessary to the performance of it. The subordinations, to which they are accustomed in domestic life, teach them self-government in common behaviour abroad, and prepare them for subjection and obedience to civil authority. What passes before their eyes, and daily happens to them, gives them experience, caution against treachery and deceit, together with numberless little rules of action and conduct, which we could not live without, and which are learnt so insensibly and so perfectly, as to be mistaken perhaps for instinct ; though they are the effect of long experience and exercise ; as much so as language, or knowledge in particular business, or the qualifications and behaviour belonging to the several ranks and professions. Thus, the beginning of our days is adapted to be, and is, a state of education in the theory and practice of mature life. We are much assisted in it by example, instruction, and the care of others ; but a great deal

fit to ourselves to do. And of this, as part is done easily of course, so part requires diligence and care, the voluntary going many things which we desire, and setting ourselves what we should have no inclination to, but for the necessity and expedience of it. For that labour and industry which the acquisition of so many absolutely requires, they would be greatly qualified for in maturity, as those in other stations would be in any other sorts of application, if both were not accustomed to them in their youth. And according as persons behave themselves, in the general education which all go through, and the particular ones adapted to particular employments, their character is formed, and made appear; they recommend themselves more or less; and are capable of, and placed in, different stations in the society of mankind.

The former part of life, then, is to be considered as an important opportunity, which nature puts into our hands, and which, when lost, is not to be recovered. And our being placed in a state of discipline throughout this life, for another world, is a providential disposition of things, exactly of the same kind as our being placed in a state of discipline during childhood, for mature age. Our condition in both respects is uniform and of a piece, and comprehended under one and the same general law of nature.

And if we are not able at all to discern, how or in what way the present life could be our preparation for another, this would be no objection against the credibility of its being so. For we do not discern how food and sleep contribute to the growth of the body, nor could have any thought that they would, before we had experience. Nor do children at all think, on the one hand, that the sports and exercises, to which they are so much addicted, contribute to their health and growth; nor, on the other, of the necessity which there is for their being restrained in them; nor are they capable of understanding the use of many parts of discipline, which nevertheless they must be made to go through, in order to qualify them for the business of mature age. Were we not able, then, to discover in what respects the present life could form us for a future one, it would be nothing more supposable than that it might, in some respects or other, from the general analogy of Providence. And this, for ought I see, might reasonably be said, even though we should not take in the consideration of God's moral government over the world. But,

**IV.** Take in this consideration, and consequently, that the

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of virtue and piety is a necessary qualification for the state, and then we may distinctly see how, and in what the present life may be a preparation for it ; since we *are capable of, improvement in that character, by religious habits ; and the present life is fit to be a discipline for such improvement ; in like manner as we already observed, how, and in what respects, infancy, childhood, and youth, are a necessary preparation, and a state of discipline for mature age.*

ing which we at present see would lead us to the of a solitary inactive state hereafter ; but, if we judge from the analogy of nature, we must suppose, according to scripture account of it, that it will be a community. There is no shadow of any thing unreasonable in conceiving, though there be no analogy for it, that this community as the Scripture represents it, under the more immediate, if such an expression may be used, the more sensible presence of God. Nor is our ignorance, what will be the objects of this happy community, nor our consequent want of what particular scope or occasion there will be for the exercise of veracity, justice, and charity, amongst the members in regard to each other, any proof that there will be no exercise for those virtues. Much less, if that were

general principle of moral understanding, we have in our mind frame various affections towards particular external objects. These affections are naturally, and of right, subject to government of the moral principle, as to the occasions upon which they may be gratified, as to the times, degrees, and manner in which the object of them may be pursued ; but then the principle of virtue can neither excite them, nor prevent their being excited. On the contrary, they are naturally felt, when objects of them are present to the mind, not only before all consideration whether they can be obtained by lawful means, after it is found they cannot. For the natural objects of affection continue so ; the necessities, conveniences, and pleasures of life, remain naturally desirable, though they cannot be obtained innocently ; nay, though they cannot possibly be obtained at all. And when the objects of any affection what cannot be obtained without unlawful means, but may be obtained by them, such affection, though its being excited, and continuing some time in the mind, be as innocent as it is natural and necessary, yet cannot but be conceived to have a tendency to incline persons to venture upon such unlawful means, therefore must be conceived as putting them in some danger.

Now, what is the general security against this danger, against their actually deviating from right ? as the danger is, so must the security be from within, from the practical principle of virtue.\* And the strengthening or improving this principle, considered as practical, or as a principle of action, will lessen the danger or increase the security against it. And this moral principle is capable of improvement, by proper discipline and exercise, by recollecting the practical impressions which example and experience have made upon us ; and, instead of following our own and mere inclination, by continually attending to the

It may be thought, that a sense of interest would as effectually restrain us from doing wrong. But if by a *sense of interest* is meant, a speculative conviction or belief that such and such indulgence would occasion them more uneasiness, upon the whole, than satisfaction, it is contrary to present experience to say, that this sense of interest is sufficient to restrain them from indulging themselves. And if by a *sense of interest* is meant, a practical regard to what is upon the whole our happiness, this is not only coincident with the principle of virtue or moral rectitude, but is a part of the idea itself. It is evident this reasonable self-love wants to be improved, as really as the principle in our nature. For we daily see it over-matched not only by the boisterous passions, but by curiosity, shame, love of imitation, by any even indolence ; especially if the interest, the temporal interest, suppose, is the end of such self-love, be at a distance. So greatly are profliigate men mistaken, when they affirm they are wholly governed by disinterestedness and self-love : And so little cause is there for moralists to disclaim the principle. See p. 284.

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and right of the case, in whatever we are engaged, be it  
or less matters, and accustoming ourselves always to  
it, as being itself the just and natural motive of action:  
his moral course of behaviour must necessarily, under  
government, be our final interest. *Thus the principle of*  
*improved into an habit, of which improvement we are*  
*able, will plainly be, in proportion to the strength of it,*  
*y against the danger which finite creatures are in, from*  
*nature of propension, or particular affections.* This  
cutting the matter supposes particular affections to re-  
a future state, which it is scarce possible to avoid sup-  
And if they do, we clearly see, that acquired habits of  
d self-government may be necessary for the regulation

However, though we were not distinctly to take in  
position, but to speak only in general, the thing really  
the same. For habits of virtue thus acquired by dis-  
are improvement in virtue; and improvement in virtue  
advancement in happiness, if the government of the  
be moral.

these things we may observe, and it will farther shew  
natural and original need of being improved by dis-  
now it comes to pass, that creatures, made upright,  
l that those who preserve their uprightness, by so do-

This tendency, in some one particular propension, may be increased, by the greater frequency of occasions naturally exciting it, than of occasions exciting others. The least voluntary indulgence in forbidden circumstances, though but in thought, will increase this wrong tendency, and may increase it further, till, peculiar conjunctures perhaps conspiring, it becomes effect; and danger of deviating from right, ends in actual deviation from it: a danger necessarily arising from the very nature of propension, and which, therefore, could not have been prevented, though it might have been escaped, or got innocently through. The case would be, as if we were to suppose a strait path marked out for a person, in which such a degree of attention would keep him steady; but if he would not attend in this degree, any one of a thousand objects catching his eye, might lead him out of it. Now, it is impossible to say, how much even the first full overt act of irregularity might disorder the inward constitution, unsettle the adjustments, and alter the proportions which formed it, and in which the uprightness of its make consisted. But repetition of irregularities would produce habits: and thus the constitution would be spoiled, and creatures, made upright, become corrupt and depraved in their settled character, proportionably to their repeated irregularities in occasional acts. But, on the contrary, these creatures might have improved and raised themselves to an higher and more secure state of virtue, by the contrary behaviour, by steadily following the moral principle, supposed to be one part of their nature, and thus withstanding that unavoidable danger of defection, which necessarily arose from propension, the other part of it. For, by thus preserving their integrity for some time, their danger would lessen, since propensions, by being inured to submit, would do it more easily and of course; and their security against this lessening danger would increase, since the moral principle would gain additional strength by exercise; both which things are implied in the notion of virtuous habits. Thus, then, vicious indulgence is not only criminal in itself, but also depraves the inward constitution and character. And virtuous self-government is not only right in itself, but also improves the inward constitution or character; and may improve it to such a degree, that though we should suppose it impossible for particular affections to be absolutely coincident with the moral principle, and consequently should allow, that such creatures as have been above supposed would for ever remain defectible; yet their danger of actually deviating from right may be almost infinitely lessened, and they fully fortified against what remains of it; if

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may be called danger, against which there is an adequate security. But still, this their higher perfection may consist in habits of virtue formed in a state of discipline, and this their more complete security remain to protect them. And thus it is plainly conceivable, that creatures without blemish, as they came out of the hands of God, in danger of going wrong, and so may stand in need of security of virtuous habits, additional to the moral principles brought into their natures by him. That which is the cause of their danger, or their want of security, may be considered as a deficiency in them, to which virtuous habits are a natural supply. And as they are naturally capable of being disciplined and improved by discipline, it may be a thing fit to suppose, that they should be placed in circumstances with a view to it; in circumstances peculiarly fitted to be, to them, a state of discipline for their improvement in virtue.

How much more strongly must this hold with respect to those who have corrupted their natures, are fallen from their rectitude, and whose passions are become excessive by violations of their inward constitution? Upright creatures want to be improved; depraved creatures want to be reformed. Education and discipline, which may be in all sorts of degrees of gentleness and of severity, is expedient

disciplined minds. Such experience, as the present state affords, of the frailty of our nature, of the boundless extravagance of ungoverned passion, of the power which an infinite Being has over us, by the various capacities of misery which he has given us; in short, that kind and degree of experience which the present state affords us, that the constitution of nature is such as to admit the possibility, the danger, and the actual event of creatures losing their innocence and happiness, and becoming vicious and wretched; hath a tendency to give us a practical sense of things very different from a mere speculative knowledge, that we are liable to vice and capable of misery. And who knows, whether the security of creatures in the highest and most settled state of perfection, may not, in part, arise from their having had such a sense of things as this, formed, and habitually fixed within them, in some state of probation? And passing through the present world with that moral attention which is necessary to the acting a right part in it, may leave everlasting impressions of this sort upon our minds. But to be a little more distinct: allurements to what is wrong; difficulties in the discharge of our duty; our not being able to act an uniform right part without some thought and care; and the opportunities which we have, or imagine we have, of avoiding what we dislike, or obtaining what we desire, by unlawful means, when we either cannot do it at all, or at least not so easily, by lawful ones; these things, *i. e.* the snares and temptations of vice, are what render the present world peculiarly fit to be a state of discipline to those who will preserve their integrity; because they render being upon our guard, resolution, and the denial of our passions, necessary in order to that end. And the exercise of such particular recollection, intention of mind, and self-government, in the practice of virtue, has, from the make of our nature, a peculiar tendency to form habits of virtue; as implying, not only a real, but also a more continued, and a more intense exercise of the virtuous principle; or a more constant and a stronger effort of virtue exerted into act. Thus, suppose a person to know himself to be in particular danger, for some time, of doing any thing wrong, which yet he fully resolves not to do, continued recollection, and keeping upon his guard, in order to make good his resolution, is a *continued* exerting of that act of virtue in a *high degree*, which need have been, and perhaps would have been, only *instantaneous* and *weak*, had the temptation been so. It is indeed ridiculous to assert, that self-denial is essential to virtue and piety; but it would have been nearer the truth, though not strictly the truth itself, to have said, that it is essential to



discipline and improvement. For, though actions materially virtuous, which have no sort of difficulty, but are perfectly agreeable to our particular inclinations, may possibly be done only from these particular inclinations, and so may not be any exercise of the principle of virtue, *i. e.* not be virtuous actions at all; yet, on the contrary, they may be an exercise of that principle, and, when they are, they have a tendency to form and fix the habit of virtue. But when the exercise of the virtuous principle is more continued, oftener repeated, and more intense, as it must be in circumstances of danger, temptation, and difficulty, of any kind and in any degree, this tendency is increased proportionably, and a more confirmed habit is the consequence.

This undoubtedly holds to a certain length, but how far it may hold, I know not. Neither our intellectual powers, nor our bodily strength, can be improved beyond such a degree; and both may be over-wrought. Possibly there may be somewhat analogous to this, with respect to the moral character; which is scarce worth considering. And I mention it only, lest it should come into some person's thoughts, not as an exception to the foregoing observations, which perhaps it is, but as a confutation of them, which it is not. And there may be several other exceptions. Observations of this kind cannot be supposed to hold minutely, and in every case. It is enough that they hold in general. And these plainly hold so far, as that from them may be seen distinctly, which is all that is intended by them, that *the present world is peculiarly fit to be a state of discipline for our improvement in virtue and piety*; in the same sense as some sciences, by requiring and engaging the attention, not to be sure of such persons as will not, but of such as will, set themselves to them, are fit to form the mind to habits of attention.

Indeed, the present state is so far from proving, in event, a discipline of virtue to the generality of men, that, on the contrary, they seem to make it a discipline of vice. And the viciousness of the world is, in different ways, the great temptation, which renders it a state of virtuous discipline, in the degree it is, to good men. The whole end, and the whole occasion of mankind being placed in such a state as the present, is not pretended to be accounted for. That which appears amidst the general corruption is, that there are some persons, who, having within them the principle of amendment and recovery, attend to and follow the notices of virtue and religion, be they more clear or more obscure, which are afforded them; and that the present world is, not only an exercise of virtue in these per-

sons, but an exercise of it in ways and degrees peculiarly apt to improve it; apt to improve it, in some respects, even beyond what would be by the exercise of it required in a perfectly virtuous society, or in a society of equally imperfect virtue with themselves. But that the present world does not actually become a state of moral discipline to many, even to the generality, *i. e.* that they do not improve or grow better in it, cannot be urged as a proof that it was not intended for moral discipline, by any who at all observe the analogy of nature. For, of the numerous seeds of vegetables and bodies of animals, which are adapted and put in the way, to improve to such a point or state of natural maturity and perfection, we do not see perhaps that one in a million actually does. Far the greatest part of them decay before they are improved to it, and appear to be absolutely destroyed. Yet no one, who does not deny all final causes, will deny, that those seeds and bodies which do attain to that point of maturity and perfection, answer the end for which they were really designed by nature; and therefore that nature designed them for such perfection. And I cannot forbear adding, though it is not to the present purpose, that the *appearance* of such an amazing *waste* in nature, with respect to these seeds and bodies, by foreign causes, is to us as unaccountable, as, what is much more terrible, the present and future ruin of so many moral agents by themselves, *i. e.* by vice.

Against this whole notion of moral discipline it may be objected, in another way, that so far as a course of behaviour, materially virtuous, proceeds from hope and fear, so far it is only a discipline and strengthening of self-love. But doing what God commands, because he commands it, is obedience, though it proceeds from hope or fear. And a course of such obedience will form habits of it: And a constant regard to veracity, justice, and charity, may form distinct habits of these particular virtues, and will certainly form habits of self-government, and of denying our inclinations, whenever veracity, justice, or charity requires it. Nor is there any foundation for this great nicety, with which some affect to distinguish in this case, in order to depreciate all religion proceeding from hope or fear. For veracity, justice, and charity, regard to God's authority, and to our own chief interest, are not only all three coincident, but each of them is, in itself, a just and natural motive or principle of action. And he who begins a good life from any one of them, and perseveres in it, as he is already in some degree, so he cannot fail of becoming more and more of that character, which is correspondent to the constitution of

nature as moral, and to the relation which God stands in to us as moral governor of it; nor, consequently, can he fail of obtaining that happiness, which this constitution and relation necessarily suppose connected with that character.

These several observations, concerning the active principle of virtue and obedience to God's commands, are applicable to passive submission or resignation to his will; which is another essential part of a right character, connected with the former, and very much in our power to form ourselves to. It may be imagined, that nothing but afflictions can give occasion for or require this virtue; that it can have no respect to, nor be any way necessary to qualify for, a state of perfect happiness; but it is not experience which can make us think thus: Prosperity itself, whilst any thing supposed desirable is not ours, begets extravagant and unbounded thoughts. Imagination is altogether as much a source of discontent as any thing in our external condition. It is indeed true, that there can be no scope for patience, when sorrow shall be no more; but there may be need of a temper of mind, which shall have been formed by patience. For, though self-love, considered merely as an active principle leading us to pursue our chief interest, cannot but be uniformly coincident with the principle of obedience to God's commands, our interest being rightly understood; because this obedience, and the pursuit of our own chief interest, must be, in every case, one and the same thing; yet it may be questioned, whether self-love, considered merely as the desire of our own interest or happiness, can, from its nature, be thus absolutely and uniformly coincident with the will of God, any more than particular affections can; (page 287) coincident in such sort, as not to be liable to be excited upon occasions, and in degrees, impossible to be gratified consistently with the constitution of things, or the divine appointments. So that *habits* of resignation may, upon this account, be requisite for all creatures; habits, I say, which signify what is formed by use. However, in general, it is obvious, that both self-love and particular affections in human creatures, considered only as passive feelings, distort and rend the mind, and therefore stand in need of discipline. Now, denial of those particular affections, in a course of active virtue and obedience to God's will, has a tendency to moderate them, and seems also to have a tendency to habituate the mind to be easy and satisfied with that degree of happiness which is allotted us, *i. e.* to moderate self-love. But the proper discipline for resignation is affliction. For a right behaviour under that trial, recollecting ourselves so as to con-

der it in the view in which religion teaches us to consider it, from the hand of God ; receiving it as what he appoints, or thinks proper to permit, in his world and under his government, this will habituate the mind to a dutiful submission ; and such submission, together with the active principle of obedience, make up the temper and character in us which answers to his sovereignty, and which absolutely belongs to the condition of our being, as dependent creatures. Nor can it be said, that this is only breaking the mind to a submission to mere power, for mere power may be accidental, and precarious, and usurped ; but it is forming within ourselves the temper of resignation to his rightful authority, who is, by nature, supreme over all.

Upon the whole, such a character, and such qualifications, are necessary for a mature state of life in the present world, as nature alone does in nowise bestow, but has put it upon us in great part to acquire, in our progress from one stage of life to another, from childhood to mature age ; put it upon us to acquire them, by giving us capacities of doing it, and by placing us, in the beginning of life, in a condition fit for it. And this is a general analogy to our condition in the present world, as in a state of moral discipline for another. It is in vain, then, to object against the credibility of the present life being intended for this purpose, that all the trouble and the danger unavoidably accompanying such discipline might have been saved us, by our being made at once the creatures and the characters *which we were to be*. For we experience, that *what we were to be*, was to be the effect of *what we would do* ; and that the general conduct of nature is, not to save us trouble or danger, but to make us capable of going through them, and to put it upon us to do so. Acquirements of our own experience and habits, are the *natural* supply to our deficiencies, and security against our dangers ; since it is as plainly natural to set ourselves to acquire the qualifications as the external things which we stand in need of. In particular, it is as plainly a general law of nature, that we should, with regard to our temporal interest, form and cultivate practical principles within us, by attention, use and discipline, as any thing whatever is a natural law ; chiefly in the beginning of life, but also throughout the whole course of it. And the alternative is left to our choice, either to improve ourselves and better our condition, or, in default of such improvement, to remain deficient and wretched. It is therefore perfectly credible, from the analogy of nature, that the same may be our

case, with respect to the happiness of a future state, and the qualifications necessary for it.

There is a third thing, which may seem implied in the present world being a state of probation, that it is a theatre of action for the manifestation of persons' characters, with respect to a future one ; not, to be sure, to an all-knowing Being, but to his creation, or part of it. This may, perhaps, be only a consequence of our being in a state of probation in the other senses. However, it is not impossible that men's showing and making manifest what is in their heart, what their real character is, may have respect to a future life, in ways and manners which we are not acquainted with ; particularly it may be a means, for the Author of nature does not appear to do any thing without means, of their being disposed of suitably to their characters, and of its being known to the creation, by way of example, that they are thus disposed of. But not to enter upon any conjectural account of this, one may just mention, that the manifestation of persons' characters contributes very much, in various ways, to the carrying on a great part of that general course of nature respecting mankind, which comes under our observation at present. I shall only add, that probation, in both these senses, as well as in that treated of in the foregoing chapter, is implied in moral government ; since by persons' behaviour under it, their characters cannot but be manifested, and, if they behave well, improved.

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## CHAP. VI.

### OF THE OPINION OF NECESSITY, CONSIDERED AS INFLUENCING PRACTICE.

THROUGHOUT the foregoing treatise it appears, that the condition of mankind, considered as inhabitants of this world only, and under the government of God which we experience, is greatly analogous to our condition, as designed for another world, or under that farther government which religion teaches us. If, therefore, any assert, as a fatalist must, that the opinion of universal necessity is reconcileable with the former, there immediately arises a question in the way of analogy ; whether he must not also own it to be reconcileable with the latter, *i. e.* with the system of religion itself, and the proof of

it. The reader, then, will observe, that the question now before us is not absolute, whether the opinion of fate be reconcileable with religion ; but hypothetical, whether, upon supposition of its being reconcileable with the constitution of nature, it be not reconcileable with religion also ? or, what pretence a fatalist—not other persons, but a fatalist—has to conclude, from his opinion, that there can be no such thing as religion ? And as the puzzle and obscurity, which must unavoidably arise from arguing upon so absurd a supposition as that of universal necessity, will, I fear, easily be seen, it will, I hope, as easily be excused.

But since it has been all along taken for granted, as a thing proved, that there is an intelligent Author of nature, or natural Governor of the world ; and since an objection may be made against the proof of this, from the opinion of universal necessity, as it may be supposed that such necessity will itself account for the origin and preservation of all things, it is requisite that this objection be distinctly answered ; or that it be shewn that a fatality, supposed consistent with what we certainly experience, does not destroy the proof of an intelligent Author and Governor of nature, before we proceed to consider, whether it destroys the proof of a moral Governor of it, or of our being in a state of religion..

Now, when it is said by a fatalist, that the whole constitution of nature, and the actions of men, that every thing and every mode and circumstance of every thing, is necessary, and could not possibly have been otherwise, it is to be observed, that this necessity does not exclude deliberation, choice, preference, and acting from certain principles, and to certain ends ; because all this is matter of undoubted experience, acknowledged by all, and what every man may, every moment, be conscious of. And from hence it follows, that necessity, alone and of itself, is in no sort an account of the constitution of nature, and how things came *to be* and *to continue* as they are ; but only an account of this *circumstance* relating to their origin and continuance, that they could not have been otherwise than they are and have been. The assertion, that every thing is by necessity of nature, is not an answer to the question, Whether the world came in to being as it is, by an intelligent Agent forming it thus, or not ; but to quite another question, Whether it came into being as it is, in that way and manner which we call *necessarily*, or in that way and manner which we call *freely*. For, suppose farther, that one, who was a fatalist, and one, who kept to his natural sense of things, and believed himself a free agent, were disputing together, and vindicating their respective

opinions, and they should happen to instance in a house, they would agree that it was built by an architect. Their difference concerning necessity and freedom, would occasion no difference of judgment concerning this, but only concerning another matter, whether the architect built it necessarily or freely. Suppose, then, they should proceed to inquire concerning the constitution of nature: in a lax way of speaking, one of them might say, it was by necessity, and the other by freedom; but, if they had any meaning to their words, as the latter must mean a free agent, so the former must at length be reduced to mean an agent, whether he would say one or more, acting by necessity; for abstract notions can do nothing. Indeed, we ascribe to God a necessary existence, uncaused by any agent: For we find within ourselves the idea of infinity, *i. e.* immensity and eternity, impossible, even in imagination, to be removed out of being. We seem to discern intuitively, that there must, and cannot but be, somewhat, external to ourselves, answering this idea, or the archetype of it. And from hence (for *this abstract*, as much as any other, implies a *concrete*) we conclude, that there is, and cannot but be, an infinite and immense eternal Being existing, prior to all design contributing to his existence, and exclusive of it. And, from the scantiness of language, a manner of speaking has been introduced, that necessity is the foundation, the reason, the account of the existence of God. But it is not alleged, nor can it be at all intended, that *every thing* exists as it does by this kind of necessity, a necessity antecedent in nature to design; it cannot, I say, be meant, that every thing exists as it does, by this kind of necessity, upon several accounts; and particularly because it is admitted, that design, in the actions of men, contributes to many alterations in nature. For, if any deny this, I shall not pretend to reason with them.

From these things it follows, *first*, That when a fatalist asserts that every thing is *by necessity*, he must mean, *by an agent acting necessarily*: he must, I say, mean this; for I am very sensible he would not choose to mean it: And, *secondly*, That the necessity, by which such an agent is supposed to act, does not exclude intelligence and design. So that, were the system of fatality admitted, it would just as much account for the formation of the world, as for the structure of an house, and no more. Necessity as much requires and supposes a necessary agent, as freedom requires and supposes a free agent to be the former of the world. And the appearances of *design* and of *final causes* in the constitution of nature, as really prove this acting agent to be an *intelligent designer*, or to act from choice,



upon the scheme of necessity, supposed possible, as upon that of freedom.

It appearing thus, that the notion of necessity does not destroy the proof, that there is an intelligent Author of nature and natural Governor of the world, the present question, which the analogy before mentioned, (page 306) suggests, and which, I think, it will answer, is this : Whether the opinion of necessity, supposed consistent with possibility, with the constitution of the world, and the natural government which we experience exercised over it, destroys all reasonable ground of belief, that we are in a state of religion ; or whether that opinion be reconcilable with religion ; with the system and the proof of it.

Suppose, then, a fatalist to educate any one, from his youth up, in his own principles ; that the child should reason upon them, and conclude, that since he cannot possibly behave otherwise than he does, he is not a subject of blame or commendation, nor can deserve to be rewarded or punished ; imagine him to eradicate the very perceptions of blame and commendation out of his mind, by means of this system ; to form his temper, and character, and behaviour to it ; and from it to judge of the treatment he was to expect, say, from reasonable men, upon his coming abroad into the world ; as the fatalist judges from this system, what he is to expect from the Author of nature, and with regard to a future state : I cannot forbear stopping here to ask, whether any one of common sense would think fit, that a child should be put upon these speculations, and be left to apply them to practice ? And a man has little pretence to reason, who is not sensible that we are all children in speculations of this kind. However, the child would doubtless be highly delighted to find himself freed from the restraints of fear and shame, with which his play-fellows were fettered and embarrassed ; and highly conceited in his superior knowledge, so far beyond his years. But conceit and vanity would be the least bad part of the influence which these principles must have, when thus reasoned and acted upon, during the course of his education. He must either be allowed to go on, and be the plague of all about him, and himself too, even to his own destruction, or else correction must be continually made use of, to supply the want of those natural perceptions of blame and commendation, which we have supposed to be removed, and to give him a practical impression of what he had reasoned himself out of the belief of, that he was, in fact, an accountable child, and to be punished for doing what he was forbid. It is therefore in reality impossible, but that the correction which he



must meet with, in the course of his education, must convince him, that if the scheme he was instructed in were not false, yet that he reasoned inconclusively upon it, and, somehow or other, misapplied it to practice and common life ; as what the fatalist experiences of the conduct of Providence at present, ought, in all reason, to convince him, that this scheme is misapplied, when applied to the subject of religion, (page 317.) But, supposing the child's temper could remain still formed to the system, and his expectation of the treatment he was to have in the world be regulated by it, so as to expect that no reasonable man would blame or punish him for any thing which he should do, because he could not help doing it ; upon this supposition, it is manifest he would, upon his coming abroad into the world, be insupportable to society, and the treatment which he would receive from it, would render it so to him ; and he could not fail of doing somewhat very soon, for which he would be delivered over into the hands of civil justice : And thus, in the end, he would be convinced of the obligations he was under to his wise instructor. Or suppose this scheme of fatality, in any other way, applied to practice, such practical application of it will be found equally absurd, equally fallacious in a practical sense : For instance, that if a man be destined to live such a time, he shall live to it, though he take no care of his own preservation : or if he be destined to die before that time, no care can prevent it ; therefore, all care about preserving one's life is to be neglected : which is the fallacy instanced in by the ancients. But now, on the contrary, none of these practical absurdities can be drawn, from reasoning upon the supposition, that we are free ; but all such reasoning, with regard to the common affairs of life, is justified by experience. And, therefore, though it were admitted that this opinion of necessity were speculatively true, yet, with regard to practice, it is as if it were false, so far as our experience reaches ; that is, to the whole of our present life. For, the constitution of the present world, and the condition in which we are actually placed, is as if we were free. And it may perhaps justly be concluded, that since the whole process of action, through every step of it, suspense, deliberation, inclining one way, determining, and at last doing as we determine, is as if we were free, therefore we are so. But the thing here insisted upon is, that under the present natural government of the world, we find we are treated and dealt with as if we were free, prior to all consideration whether we are or not. Were this opinion therefore, of necessity, admitted to be ever so true, yet such is

fact our condition and the natural course of things, that, whenever we apply it to life and practice, this application of it always misleads us, and cannot but mislead us, in a most dreadful manner, with regard to our present interest. And how can people think themselves so very secure, then, that the same application of the same opinion may not mislead them also in some analogous manner, with respect to a future, a more general, and more important interest? For, religion being a practical subject, and the analogy of nature shewing us, that we have not faculties to apply this opinion, were it a true one, to practical subjects; whenever we do apply it to the subject of religion, and thence conclude, that we are free from its obligations, it is plain this conclusion cannot be depended upon. There will still remain just reason to think, whatever appearances are, that we deceive ourselves; in somewhat of a like manner as when people fancy they can draw contradictory conclusions from the idea of infinity.

From these things together, the attentive reader will see, it follows, that if, upon supposition of freedom, the evidence of religion be conclusive, it remains so, upon supposition of necessity; because the notion of necessity is not applicable to practical subjects; i. e. with respect to them, is as if it were not true. Nor does this contain any reflection upon reason, but only upon what is unreasonable. For, to pretend to act upon reason, in opposition to practical principles which the Author of our nature gave us to act upon, and to pretend to apply our reason to subjects, with regard to which our own short views, and even our experience, will shew us it cannot be depended upon,—and such, at best, the subject of necessity must be,—this is vanity, conceit, and unreasonableness.

But this is not all. For we find within ourselves a will, and are conscious of a character. Now, if this in us, be reconcileable with fate, it is reconcileable with it in the Author of nature. And, besides, natural government and final causes imply a character and a will in the Governor and Designer; \* a will concerning the creatures whom he governs. The Author of nature, then, being certainly of some character or other, notwithstanding necessity, it is evident this necessity is as reconcileable with the particular character of benevolence, veracity, and justice in him, which attributes are the foundation of religion, as with any

\* By *will* and *character* is meant that, which, in speaking of men, we should press, not only by these words, but also by the words *temper, taste, dispositions, practical principles*; that *whole frame of mind, from whence we act in one manner rather than another.*

other character ; since we find this necessity no more hinders *men* from being benevolent than cruel ; true, than faithless ; just, than unjust, or if the fatalist pleases, what we call unjust. For it is said indeed, that what, upon supposition of freedom, would be just punishment, upon supposition of necessity, becomes manifestly unjust ; because it is punishment inflicted for doing that which persons could not avoid doing. As if the necessity, which is supposed to destroy the injustice of murder, for instance, would not also destroy the injustice of punishing it. However, as little to the purpose as this objection is in itself, it is very much to the purpose to observe from it, how the notions of justice and injustice remain, even whilst we endeavour to suppose them removed ; how they force themselves upon the mind, even whilst we are making suppositions destructive of them : for there is not, perhaps, a man in the world, but would be ready to make this objection at first thought.

But though it is most evident, that universal necessity, if it be reconcileable with any thing, is reconcileable with that character in the Author of nature, which is the foundation of religion ; “ yet, does it not plainly destroy the proof, that he is of that character, and consequently the proof of religion ? ” By no means : For we find, that happiness and misery are not our fate, in any such sense as not to be the consequences of our behaviour, but that they are the consequences of it. (Chap. ii.) We find God exercises the same kind of government over us, with that which a father exercises over his children, and a civil magistrate over his subjects. Now, whatever becomes of abstract questions concerning liberty and necessity, it evidently appears to us, that veracity and justice must be the natural rule and measure of exercising this authority, or government ; to a Being, who can have no competitions, or interfering of interests, with his creatures and his subjects.

But as the doctrine of liberty, though we experience its truth, may be perplexed with difficulties which run up into the most abstruse of all speculations, and as the opinion of necessity seems to be the very basis upon which infidelity grounds itself, it may be of some use to offer a more particular proof of the obligations of religion, which may distinctly be shewn not to be destroyed by this opinion.

The proof, from final causes, of an intelligent Author of nature, is not affected by the opinion of necessity ; supposing necessity a thing possible in itself, and reconcileable with the constitution of things. (Page 307, &c.) And it is a matter of fact, independent on this or any other speculation, that he

governs the world by the method of rewards and punishments ; chap. ii.) and also that he hath given us a moral faculty, by which we distinguish between actions, and approve some as virtuous and of good desert, and disapprove others as vicious and of ill desert. (Diss. ii.) Now, this moral discernment implies, in the notion of it, a rule of action, and a rule of a very peculiar kind ; for it carries in it authority and a right of direction ; authority in such a sense, as that we cannot depart from it without being self-condemned.\* And that the dictates of this moral faculty, which are by nature a rule to us, are moreover the laws of God, laws in a sense including sanctions, may be thus proved. Consciousness of a rule or guide of action, in creatures who are capable of considering it as given them by their Maker, not only raises immediately a sense of duty, but also a sense of security in following it, and of danger in deviating from it. A direction of the Author of nature, given to creatures capable of looking upon it as such, is plainly a command from him ; and a command from him necessarily includes in it, at least, an implicit promise in case of obedience, or threatening in case of disobedience. But then the sense or perception of good and ill desert, (Diss. ii.) which is contained in the moral discernment, renders the sanction explicit, and makes it appear, as one may say, expressed. For, since his method of government is to reward and punish actions, his having annexed to some actions an inseparable sense of good desert, and to others of ill, this surely amounts to declaring upon whom his punishments shall be inflicted, and his rewards be bestowed. For he must have given us this discernment and sense of things, as a presentiment of what is to be hereafter ; that is, by way of information before-hand, what we are finally to expect in this world. There is, then, most evident ground to think, that the government of God, upon the whole, will be found to correspond to the nature which he has given us ; and that, in the upshot and issue of things, happiness and misery shall, in fact and event, be made to follow virtue and vice respectively ; as he has already, in so peculiar a manner, associated the ideas of them in our minds. And from hence might easily be deduced the obligations of religious worship, were it only to be considered as a means of preserving upon our minds a sense of this moral government of God, and securing our obedience to it ; which yet is an extremely imperfect view of that most important duty.

Now, I say, no objection from necessity can lie against this

\* Sermon 2d at the Rolls.

# UNION OF NECESSITY, AS INFLUENCING PRACTICE.

proof of religion: None against the proposition reason, that we have such a moral faculty and discernment, because this is a mere matter of fact, a thing of experience; that human kind is thus constituted: none against the conclusion, that God will finally reward the righteous and punish the wicked, is not here drawn, from its appearing that *he should*, but from its appearing, that he has *so* will. And this he hath certainly told us, in the promise and threatening, which, it hath been observed, the natural command implies, and the sense of good and ill desert, which he has given us, more distinctly expresses. And this is confirmed from fact is confirmed, and, in some degree, even verified by other facts; by the natural tendencies of virtue and vice (Page 274.); and by this, that God, in the natural course of providence, punishes vicious actions, as mischievous to society; and also vicious actions, as such, in the strictest sense. (Page 268, &c.) So that the general proof of religion is unanswerably real, even upon the wild supposition we are arguing upon.

It must likewise be observed farther, that natural religion besides this, an external evidence, which the doctrine of miracles, if it could be true, would not affect. For, suppose a

what time, and in what manner, it came first into the world ; and whether it were believed by any considerable part of it. And were he upon inquiry to find, that a particular person, in a late age, first of all proposed it as a deduction of reason, and that mankind were before wholly ignorant of it ; then, though its evidence from reason would remain, there would be no additional probability of its truth, from the account of its discovery. But instead of this being the fact of the case, on the contrary, he would find what could not but afford him a very strong confirmation of its truth : *First*, That somewhat of this system, with more or fewer additions and alterations, hath been professed in all ages and countries of which we have any certain information relating to this matter. *Secondly*, That it is certain historical fact, so far as we can trace things up, that this whole system of belief, that there is one God, the Creator and moral Governor of the world, and that mankind is in a state of religion, was received in the first ages. And, *thirdly*, That as as there is no hint or intimation in history, that this system was first reasoned out ; so there is express historical or traditional evidence, as ancient as history, that it was taught first by revelation. Now, these things must be allowed to be of great weight. The first of them, general consent, shews this system to be conformable to the common sense of mankind. The second, namely, that religion was believed in the first ages of the world, especially as it does not appear that there were then any superstitious or false additions to it, cannot but be a farther confirmation of its truth. For it is a proof of this alternative ; either that it came into the world by revelation, or that it is natural, obvious, and forces itself upon the mind. The former of these is the conclusion of learned men. And whoever will consider, how unapt for speculation rude and uncultivated minds are, will, perhaps from hence alone, be strongly inclined to believe it the truth. And as it is shewn in the second part (ch. ii.) of this treatise, that there is nothing of such peculiar presumption against a revelation in the beginning of the world, as there is supposed to be against subsequent ones ; a sceptic could not, I think, give any account, which would appear more probable even to himself, of the early pretences to revelation, than by supposing some real original one, from whence they were copied. And the third thing above-mentioned, that there is express historical or traditional evidence, as ancient as history, of the system of religion being taught mankind by revelation ; this must be admitted as some degree of real proof, that it was so taught. For why should

not the most ancient tradition be admitted as some additional proof of a fact, against which there is no presumption? And this proof is mentioned here, because it has its weight to shew, that religion came into the world by revelation, prior to all consideration of the proper authority of any book supposed to contain it; and even prior to all consideration, whether the revelation itself be uncorruptly handed down and related, or mixed and darkened with fables. Thus the historical account which we have, of the origin of religion, taking in all circumstances, is a real confirmation of its truth, no way affected by the opinion of necessity. And the *external* evidence, even of natural religion, is by no means inconsiderable.

But it is carefully to be observed, and ought to be recollected after all proofs of virtue and religion, which are only general; that as speculative reason may be neglected, prejudiced, and deceived, so also may our moral understanding be impaired and perverted, and the dictates of it not impartially attended to. This, indeed, proves nothing against the reality of our speculative or practical faculties of perception; against their being intended by nature to inform us in the theory of things, and instruct us how we are to behave, and what we are to expect, in consequence of our behaviour. Yet our liableness, in the degree we are liable, to prejudice and perversion, is a most serious admonition to us to be upon our guard, with respect to what is of such consequence, as our determinations concerning virtue and religion; and particularly, not to take custom, and fashion, and slight notions of honour, or imaginations of present ease, use, and convenience to mankind, for the only moral rule. (Diss. ii.)

The foregoing observations, drawn from the nature of the thing, and the history of religion, amount, when taken together, to a real practical proof of it, not to be confuted; such a proof as, considering the infinite importance of the thing, I apprehend, would be admitted fully sufficient, in reason, to influence the actions of men, who act upon thought and reflection; if it were admitted that there is no proof of the contrary. But it may be said; “There are many probabilities, which cannot indeed be confuted, *i. e.* shewn to be no probabilities, and yet may be overbalanced by greater probabilities on the other side; much more by demonstration. And there is no occasion to object against particular arguments alleged for an opinion, when the opinion itself may be clearly shewn to be false, without meddling with such arguments at all, but leaving them just as they are. (Pages 233, 239.) Now the method of



government by rewards and punishments, and especially rewarding and punishing good and ill desert, as such, respectively, must go upon supposition that we are free, and not necessary agents. And it is incredible, that the author of nature should govern us upon a supposition as true, which he knows to be false ; and therefore absurd to think, he will reward or punish us for our actions hereafter ; especially that he will do it under the notion, that they are of good or ill desert." Here, then, the matter is brought to a point. And the answer to all this is full, and not to be evaded ; that the whole constitution and course of things, the whole analogy of providence, shows, beyond possibility of doubt, that the conclusion from this reasoning is false, wherever the fallacy lies. The doctrine of freedom, indeed, clearly shows where ; in supposing ourselves necessary, when in truth we are free agents. But, upon the supposition of necessity, the fallacy lies in taking for granted, that it is incredible necessary agents should be rewarded and punished. But that, somehow or other, the conclusion now mentioned is false, is most certain. For it is fact, that God does govern even brute creatures by the method of rewards and punishments, in the natural course of things. And men are rewarded and punished for their actions, punished for actions mischievous to society as being so, punished for vicious actions as such, by the natural instrumentality of each other, under the present conduct of Providence. Nay, even the affection of gratitude, and the passion of resentment, and the rewards and punishments following from them, which in general are to be considered as natural, *i. e.* from the author of nature ; these rewards and punishments, being naturally \* annexed to actions considered as implying good intention and good desert, ill intention and ill desert ; these natural rewards and punishments, I say, are as much a contradiction to the conclusion above, and shew its falsehood, as a more exact and complete rewarding and punishing of good and ill desert, as such. So that, if it be incredible that necessary agents should be thus rewarded and punished, then men are not necessary, but free ; since it is matter of fact that they are thus rewarded and punished. But if, on the contrary, which is the supposition we have been arguing upon, it be insisted, that men are necessary agents, then there is nothing incredible in the farther supposition of necessary agents being thus rewarded and punished ; since we ourselves are thus dealt with.

\* Sermon eighth, at the Rolls.



From the whole, therefore, it must follow, that a necessity supposed possible, and reconcilable with the constitution of things, does in no sort prove, that the author of nature will not, nor destroy the proof that he will, finally, and upon the whole, in his eternal government, render his creatures happy or miserable, by some means or other, as they behave well or ill. Or, to express this conclusion in words conformable to the title of the chapter, the analogy of nature shows us, that the opinion of necessity, considered as practical, is false. And if necessity, upon the supposition above-mentioned, doth not destroy the proof of natural religion, it evidently makes no alteration in the proof of revealed.

From these things, likewise, we may learn in what sense to understand that general assertion, that the opinion of necessity is essentially destructive of all religion. *First*, In a practical sense; that by this notion atheistical men pretend to satisfy and encourage themselves in vice, and justify to others their disregard to all religion. And, *secondly*, In the strictest sense; that it is a contradiction to the whole constitution of nature, and to what we may every moment experience in ourselves, and so overturns every thing. But by no means is this assertion to be understood, as if necessity, supposing it could possibly be reconciled with the constitution of things, and with what we experience, were not also reconcilable with religion; for upon this supposition it demonstrably is so.

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## CHAP. VII.

OF THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD, CONSIDERED AS A SCHEME OF CONSTITUTION, IMPERFECTLY COMPREHENDED.

THOUGH it be, as it cannot but be, acknowledged, that the analogy of nature gives a strong credibility to the general doctrine of religion, and to the several particular things contained in it, considered as so many matters of fact; and likewise, that it shows this credibility not to be destroyed by any notions of necessity; yet still, objections may be insisted upon against the wisdom, equity, and goodness of the divine government, implied in the notion of religion, and against the method by which this government is conducted, to which objections analogy

can be no direct answer. For the credibility, or the certain truth, of a matter of fact, does not immediately prove any thing concerning the wisdom or goodness of it : and analogy can do no more, immediately or directly, than shew such and such things to be true or credible, considered only as matters of fact. But still, if, upon supposition of a moral constitution of nature and a moral government over it, analogy suggests and makes it credible, that this government must be a scheme, system, or constitution of government, as distinguished from a number of single unconnected acts of distributive justice and goodness ; and likewise, that it must be a scheme, so imperfectly comprehended, and of such a sort in other respects, as to afford a direct general answer to all objections against the justice and goodness of it ; then analogy is, remotely, of great service in answering those objections, both by suggesting the answer, and shewing it to be a credible one.

Now, this, upon inquiry, will be found to be the case. For, *first*, Upon supposition that God exercises a moral government over the world, the analogy of his natural government suggests, and makes it credible, that his moral government must be a scheme quite beyond our comprehension ; and this affords a general answer to all objections against the justice and goodness of it. And, *secondly*, A more distinct observation of some particular things contained in God's scheme of natural government, the like things being supposed, by analogy, to be contained in his moral government, will farther show how little weight is to be laid upon these objections.

I. Upon supposition that God exercises a moral government over the world, the analogy of his natural government suggests and makes it credible, that his moral government must be a scheme quite beyond our comprehension : and this affords a general answer to all objections against the justice and goodness of it. It is most obvious, analogy renders it highly credible, that upon supposition of a moral government, it must be a scheme,—for the world, and the whole natural government of it, appears to be so—to be a scheme, system, or constitution, whose parts correspond to each other, and to a whole, as really as any work of art, or as any particular model of a civil constitution and government. In this great scheme of the natural world, individuals have various peculiar relations to other individuals of their own species. And whole species are, we find, variously related to other species, upon this earth. Nor do we know how much farther these kinds of relations may extend. And, as there is not any action, or natural event, which

we are acquainted with, so single and unconnected as not to have a respect to some other actions and events, so, possibly, each of them, when it has not an immediate, may yet have a remote, natural relation to other actions and events, much beyond the compass of this present world. There seems, indeed, nothing from whence we can so much as make a conjecture, whether all creatures, actions, and events, throughout the whole of nature, have relations to each other. But, as it is obvious that all events have future unknown consequences, so, if we trace any, as far as we can go, into what is connected with it, we shall find, that if such event were not connected with somewhat farther in nature unknown to us, somewhat both past and present, such event could not possibly have been at all. Nor can we give the whole account of any one thing whatever; of all its causes, ends, and necessary adjuncts; those adjuncts, I mean, without which it could not have been. By this most astonishing connexion, these reciprocal correspondences and mutual relations, every thing which we see in the course of nature, is actually brought about. And things, seemingly the most insignificant imaginable, are perpetually observed to be necessary conditions to other things of the greatest importance; so that any one thing whatever may, for ought we know to the contrary, be a necessary condition to any other. The natural world, then, and natural government of it, being such an incomprehensible scheme; so incomprehensible, that a man must really, in the literal sense, know nothing at all, who is not sensible of his ignorance in it: this immediately suggests, and strongly shows the credibility, that the moral world and government of it may be so too. Indeed, the natural and moral constitution and government of the world are so connected, as to make up together but one scheme; and it is highly probable, that the first is formed and carried on merely in subserviency to the latter, as the vegetable world is for the animal, and organized bodies for minds. But the thing intended here is, without inquiring how far the administration of the natural world is subordinate to that of the moral, only to observe the credibility, that one should be analogous or similar to the other: that, therefore, every act of divine justice and goodness may be supposed to look much beyond itself and its immediate object; may have some reference to other parts of God's moral administration, and to a general moral plan; and that every circumstance of this his moral government may be adjusted beforehand with a view to the whole of it. Thus, for example: the determined length of time, and the degrees and

ways in which virtue is to remain in a state of warfare and discipline, and in which wickedness is permitted to have its progress; the times appointed for the execution of justice; the appointed instruments of it; the kinds of rewards and punishments, and the manners of their distribution; all particular instances of divine justice and goodness, and every circumstance of them, may have such respects to each other, as to make up altogether a whole, connected and related in all its parts; a scheme, or system, which is as properly one as the natural world is, and of the like kind. And supposing this to be the case, it is most evident that we are not competent judges of this scheme, from the small parts of it which come within our view in the present life; and therefore no objections against any of these parts can be insisted upon by reasonable men.

This our ignorance, and the consequence here drawn from it, are universally acknowledged upon other occasions; and, though scarce denied, yet are universally forgot, when persons come to argue against religion. And it is not perhaps easy, even for the most reasonable men, always to bear in mind the degree of our ignorance, and make due allowances for it. Upon these accounts, it may not be useless to go on a little farther, in order to shew more distinctly, how just an answer our ignorance is, to objections against the scheme of Providence. Suppose, then, a person boldly to assert, that the things complained of, the origin and continuance of evil, might easily have been prevented by repeated interpositions, (pages 323, 324;) interpositions so guarded and circumstanced, as would preclude all mischief arising from them: or, if this were impracticable, that a *scheme* of government is itself an imperfection; since more good might have been produced without any scheme, system, or constitution at all, by continued single unrelated acts of distributive justice and goodness, because these would have occasioned no irregularities: And farther than this, it is presumed, the objections will not be carried. Yet the answer is obvious; that, were these assertions true, still the observations above, concerning our ignorance in the scheme of divine government, and the consequence drawn from it, would hold in great measure, enough to vindicate religion against all objections from the disorders of the present state. Were these assertions true, yet the government of the world might be just and good notwithstanding; for, at the most, they would infer nothing more, than that it might have been better. But, indeed, they are mere arbitrary assertions; no man being sufficiently acquainted with the possibilities of things, to bring

any proof of them to the lowest degree of probability. For, however possible what is asserted may seem, yet many instances may be alleged, in things much less out of our reach, of suppositions absolutely impossible, and reducible to the most palpable self-contradictions, which not every one by any means would perceive to be such, nor perhaps any one at first sight suspect. From these things it is easy to see distinctly, how our ignorance, as it is the common, is really a satisfactory answer to all objections against the justice and goodness of Providence. If a man, contemplating any one providential dispensation, which had no relation to any others, should object, that he discerned in it a disregard to justice, or a deficiency of goodness, nothing would be less an answer to such objection than our ignorance in other parts of Providence, or in the possibilities of things, noway related to what he was contemplating. But when we know not but the parts objected against may be relative to other parts unknown to us, and when we are unacquainted with what is, in the nature of the thing, practicable in the case before us, then our ignorance is a satisfactory answer; because some unknown relation, or some unknown impossibility, may render what is objected against just and good; nay, good in the highest practicable degree.

II. And how little weight is to be laid upon such objections will farther appear, by a more distinct observation of some particular things contained in the natural government of God, the like to which may be supposed, from analogy, to be contained in his moral government.

*First*, As, in the scheme of the natural world, no ends appear to be accomplished without means; so we find that means very undesirable often conduce to bring about ends, in such a measure desirable, as greatly to overbalance the disagreeableness of the means. And in cases where such means are conducive to such ends, it is not reason, but experience, which shews us that they are thus conducive. Experience also shews many means to be conducive and necessary to accomplish ends, which means, before experience, we should have thought would have had even a contrary tendency. Now, from these observations relating to the natural scheme of the world, the moral being supposed analogous to it, arises a great credibility, that the putting our misery in each other's power to the degree it is, and making men liable to vice to the degree we are; and, in general, that those things which are objected against the moral scheme of Providence, may be, upon the whole, friendly and assistant to virtue, and productive of

an over-balance of happiness, i. e. the things objected against may be means by which an over-balance of good will in the end be found produced. And, from the same observations, it appears to be no presumption against this, that we do not, if indeed we do not, see those means to have any such tendency, or that they seem to us to have a contrary one. Thus, those things which we call irregularities, may not be so at all; because they may be means of accomplishing wise and good ends more considerable. And it may be added, as above, (page 322,) that they may also be the only means by which these wise and good ends are capable of being accomplished.

After these observations it may be proper to add, in order to obviate an absurd and wicked conclusion from any of them, that though the constitution of our nature, from whence we are capable of vice and misery, may, as it undoubtedly does, contribute to the perfection and happiness of the world; and though the actual permission of evil may be beneficial to it, (i. e. it would have been more mischievous, not that a wicked person had himself abstained from his own wickedness, but that any one had forcibly prevented it, than that it was permitted); yet, notwithstanding, it might have been much better for the world if this very evil had never been done. Nay, it is most clearly conceivable, that the very commission of wickedness may be beneficial to the world, and yet that it would be infinitely more beneficial for men to refrain from it. For thus, in the wise and good constitution of the natural world, there are disorders which bring their own cures; diseases, which are themselves remedies. Many a man would have died, had it not been for the gout or a fever; yet it would be thought madness to assert, that sickness is a better or more perfect state than health; though the like, with regard to the moral world, has been asserted. But,

*Secondly,* The natural government of the world is carried on by general laws. For this there may be wise and good reasons; the wisest and best, for ought we know to the contrary. And that there are such reasons, is suggested to our thoughts by the analogy of nature; by our being made to experience good ends to be accomplished, as indeed all the good which we enjoy is accomplished, by this means, that the laws by which the world is governed are general. For we have scarce any kind of enjoyments, but what we are in some way or other instrumental in procuring ourselves, by acting in a manner which we foresee likely to procure them: now this foresight could not be at all, were not the government of the world carried on

by general laws. And though, for ought we know to the contrary, every single case may be, at length, found to have been provided for even by these; yet to prevent all irregularities, or remedy them as they arise, by the wisest and best general laws, may be impossible in the nature of things, as we see it is absolutely impossible in civil government. But then we are ready to think, that the constitution of nature remaining as it is, and the course of things being permitted to go on, in other respects, as it does, there might be interpositions to prevent irregularities, though they could not have been prevented or remedied by any general laws. And there would indeed be reason to wish—which, by the way, is very different from a right to claim—that all irregularities were prevented or remedied by present interpositions, if these interpositions would have no other effect than this. But it is plain they would have some visible and immediate bad effects; for instance, they would encourage idleness and negligence, and they would render doubtful the natural rule of life, which is ascertained by this very thing, that the course of the world is carried on by general laws. And farther, it is certain they would have distant effects, and very great ones too, by means of the wonderful connexions before mentioned. (Page 319, &c.) So that we cannot so much as guess, what would be the whole result of the interpositions desired. It may be said, any bad result might be prevented by farther interpositions, whenever there was occasion for them; but this again is talking quite at random, and in the dark. (Pages 321, 322.) Upon the whole, then, we see wise reasons why the course of the world should be carried on by general laws, and good ends accomplished by this means, and, for ought we know, there may be the wisest reasons for it, and the best ends accomplished by it. We have no ground to believe, that all irregularities could be remedied as they arise, or could have been precluded by general laws. We find that interpositions would produce evil, and prevent good; and, for ought we know, they would produce greater evil than they would prevent, and prevent greater good than they would produce. And if this be the case, then the not interposing is so far from being a ground of complaint, that it is an instance of goodness. This is intelligible and sufficient; and going farther seems beyond the utmost reach of our faculties.

But it may be said, that “after all, these supposed impossibilities and relations are what we are unacquainted with; and we must judge of religion, as of other things, by what we do know, and look upon the rest as nothing: or, however, that



he answers here given to what is objected against religion, may equally be made use of to invalidate the proof of it, since their stress lies so very much upon our ignorance." But,

*First*, Though total ignorance in any matter does indeed equally destroy, or rather preclude, all proof concerning it, and objections against it, yet partial ignorance does not. For we may in any degree be convinced, that a person is of such a character, and consequently will pursue such ends, though we are greatly ignorant what is the proper way of acting, in order the most effectually to obtain those ends ; and in this case objections against his manner of acting, as seemingly not conducive to obtain them, might be answered by our ignorance, though the proof that such ends were intended, might not at all be invalidated by it. Thus, the proof of religion is a proof of the moral character of God, and consequently, that his government is moral, and that every one, upon the whole, shall receive according to his deserts ; a proof that this is the designed end of his government. But we are not competent judges what is the proper way of acting, in order the most effectually to accomplish this end. (Pp. 238, 239.) Therefore our ignorance is an answer to objections against the conduct of Providence, in permitting irregularities, as seeming contradictory to this end. Now, since it is so obvious that our ignorance may be a satisfactory answer to objections against a thing, and yet not affect the proof of it ; till it can be shewn, it is frivolous to assert, that our ignorance invalidates the proof of religion, as it does the objections against it.

*Secondly*, Suppose unknown impossibilities, and unknown relations, might justly be urged to invalidate the proof of religion, as well as to answer objections against it, and that in consequence of this, the proof of it were doubtful ; yet still, let the assertion be despised, or let it be ridiculed ; it is undeniably true, that moral obligations would remain certain, though it were not certain what would, upon the whole, be the consequences of observing or violating them. For these obligations arise immediately and necessarily from the judgment of our own mind, unless perverted, which we cannot violate without being self-condemned. And they would be certain, too, from considerations of interest. For, though it were doubtful what will be the future consequences of virtue and vice, yet it is however credible, that they may have those consequences which religion teaches us they will ; and this credibility is certain (page 234, and part ii. ch. vi.) obligation in point of prudence, to abstain from all wickedness, and to live in the conscientious practice of all that is good. But,



*Thirdly*, The answers above given to the objections against religion, cannot equally be made use of to invalidate the proof of it. For, upon supposition that God exercises a moral government over the world, analogy does most strongly lead us to conclude, that this moral government must be a scheme, or constitution, beyond our comprehension. And a thousand particular analogies shew us, that parts of such a scheme, from their relation to other parts, may conduce to accomplish ends, which we should have thought they had no tendency at all to accomplish ; nay, ends, which, before experience, we should have thought such parts were contradictory to, and had a tendency to prevent. And, therefore, all these analogies shew, that the way of arguing made use of in objecting against religion, is delusive ; because they shew that it is not at all incredible, that, could we comprehend the whole, we should find the permission of the disorders objected against, to be consistent with justice and goodness, and even to be instances of them.— Now this is not applicable to the proof of religion, as it is to the objections against it ;\* and therefore cannot invalidate that proof as it does these objections.

*Lastly*, From the observation now made it is easy to see, that the answers above given to the objections against Providence, though, in a general way of speaking, they may be said to be taken from our ignorance, yet are by no means taken merely from that, but from somewhat which analogy shews us concerning it. For analogy shews us positively, that our ignorance in the possibilities of things, and the various relations in nature, renders us incompetent judges, and leads us to false conclusions, in cases similar to this, in which we pretend to judge and to object. So that the things above insisted upon, are not mere suppositions of unknown impossibilities and relations ; but they are suggested to our thoughts, and even forced upon the observation of serious men, and rendered credible too, by the analogy of nature. And, therefore, to take these things into the account, is to judge by experience, and what we do know ; and it is not judging so, to take no notice of them.

\* Sermon at the Rolls, p. 312. 2d Edit.

## CONCLUSION.

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**THE** observations of the last chapter lead us to consider this little scene of human life, in which we are so busily engaged, as having reference, of some sort or other, to a much larger plan of things. Whether we are any way related to the more distant parts of the boundless universe into which we are brought, is altogether uncertain. But it is evident, that the course of things which comes within our view, is connected with somewhat past, present, and future beyond it. (Page 319, &c.) So that we are placed, as one may speak, in the middle of a scheme, not a fixed, but a progressive one, every way incomprehensible; incomprehensible, in a manner, equally with respect to what has been, what now is, and what shall be hereafter. And this scheme cannot but contain in it somewhat as wonderful, and as much beyond our thought and conception, (see part ii. ch. 2.) as any thing in that of religion. For, will any man in his senses say, that it is less difficult to conceive how the world came to be, and to continue as it is, without, than with, an intelligent Author and Governor of it? or, admitting an intelligent Governor of it, that there is some other rule of government more natural, and of easier conception, than that which we call moral? Indeed, without an intelligent Author and Governor of nature, no account at all can be given, how this universe, or the part of it particularly in which we are concerned, came to be, and the course of it to be carried on, as it is; nor any of its general end and design, without a moral Governor of it. That there is an intelligent Author of nature, and natural Governor of the world, is a principle gone upon in the foregoing treatise, as proved, and generally known and confessed to be proved. And the very notion of an intelligent Author of nature, proved by particular final causes, implies a will and a character. (Page 311.) Now, as our whole nature, the nature which he has given us, leads us to conclude his will and character to be moral, just and good; so we can scarce in imagination conceive, what it

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otherwise. However, in consequence of this his will and power, whatever it be, he formed the universe as it is, and in the course of it as he does, rather than in any other manner, and has assigned to us, and to all living creatures, a part to act and a lot in it. Irrational creatures act this their part, and undergo the pleasures and the pains allotted them, without any reflection. But one would think it impossible, that creatures endued with reason could avoid reflecting somewhat upon all this; reflecting, if not from whence we came, at least, whither we are going, and what the mysterious scheme in the midst of which we find ourselves, will at length terminate and produce; a scheme in which it is certain we are interested, and in which we may be interested even before our conception. For many things prove it palpably absurd to suppose, that we shall cease to be at death. Particular instances do most sensibly shew us, that there is nothing to be accounted strange in our being to exist in another state of life. That we are now living beings affords a strong probability that we shall *continue* so; unless there be some positive ground, whereof there is none from reason or analogy, to think death will be our lot. Were a persuasion of this kind ever so well grounded, there would surely be little reason to take pleasure in it. Indeed, it can have no other ground than some such ima-

respectively annexed. So that, were speculation to leave us uncertain, whether it were likely that the Author of nature, in giving happiness and misery to his creatures, hath regard to their actions or not ; yet, since we find by experience that he hath such regard, the whole sense of things which he has given us plainly leads us, at once, and without any elaborate inquiries, to think, that it may, indeed must, be to good actions chiefly that he hath annexed happiness, and to bad actions misery ; or that he will, upon the whole, reward those who do well, and punish those who do evil. To confirm this from the constitution of the world, it has been observed, that some sort of moral government is necessarily implied in that natural government of God which we experience ourselves under ; that good and bad actions, at present, are naturally rewarded and punished, not only as beneficial and mischievous to society, but also as virtuous and vicious, and that there is, in the very nature of the thing, a tendency to their being rewarded and punished in a much higher degree than they are at present. And though this higher degree of distributive justice, which nature thus points out and leads towards, is prevented for a time from taking place, it is by obstacles which the state of this world unhappily throws in its way, and which, therefore, are in their nature temporary. Now, as these things, in the natural conduct of Providence, are observable on the side of virtue, so there is nothing to be set against them on the side of vice. A moral scheme of government, then, is visibly established, and, in some degree, carried into execution ; and this, together with the essential tendencies of virtue and vice duly considered, naturally raise in us an apprehension, that it will be carried on farther towards perfection in a future state, and that every one shall there receive according to his deserts. And if this be so, then our future and general interest, under the moral government of God, is appointed to depend upon our behaviour, notwithstanding the difficulty which this may occasion of securing it, and the danger of losing it ; just in the same manner as our temporal interest, under his natural government, is appointed to depend upon our behaviour, notwithstanding the like difficulty and danger. For, from our original constitution, and that of the world which we inhabit, we are naturally trusted with ourselves, with our own conduct and our own interest. And from the same constitution of nature, especially joined with that course of things which is owing to men, we have temptations to be unfaithful in this trust, to forfeit this interest, to neglect it, and run ourselves into misery and ruin. From these temptations

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the difficulties of behaving so as to secure our temporal and the hazard of behaving so as to miscarry in it, therefore, nothing incredible in supposing, there may be some difficulty and hazard with regard to that chief end which religion lays before us. Indeed, the whole how it came to pass that we were placed in such a condition, must be beyond our comprehension. But it is accounted for by what religion teaches us, that the Christian virtue and piety must be a necessary qualification for a state of security and happiness, under the moral government of God; in like manner, as some certain qualifications are necessary for every particular condition of life, in the natural government; and that the present state was appointed to be a school of discipline, for improving in ourselves our character. Now, this intention of nature is rendered highly evident by observing, that we are plainly made for improvement in all kinds; that it is a general appointment of Providence that we cultivate practical principles, and form within us habits of action, in order to become fit for what we are wholly unfit for before; that, in particular, childhood and youth are naturally appointed to be a state of discipline for mankind; and that the present world is peculiarly fitted for a moral discipline. And, whereas objections are urged

ment in consequence of it, especially when we consider, how very questionable it is whether any thing at all can be gained by vice ; (page 266) how unquestionably little, as well as precarious, the pleasures and profits of it are at the best, and how soon they must be parted with at the longest. For, in the deliberations of reason, concerning what we are to pursue and what to avoid, as temptations to any thing from mere passion are supposed out of the case ; so inducements to vice, from cool expectations of pleasure and interest, so small, and uncertain, and short, are really so insignificant, as in the view of reason, to be almost nothing in themselves, and, in comparison with the importance of religion, they quite disappear and are lost. Mere passion, indeed, may be alleged, though not as a reason, yet as an excuse for a vicious course of life. And how sorry an excuse it is will be manifest by observing, that we are placed in a condition in which we are unavoidably inured to govern our passions, by being necessitated to govern them ; and to lay ourselves under the same kind of restraints, and as great ones too, from temporal regards, as virtue and piety, in the ordinary course of things, require. The plea of ungovernable passion, then, on the side of vice, is the poorest of all things, for it is no reason, and but a poor excuse. But the proper motives to religion, are the proper proofs of it, from our moral nature, from the presages of conscience, and our natural apprehension of God, under the character of a righteous Governor and Judge ; a nature, and conscience, and apprehension given us by him ; and from the confirmation of the dictates of reason, *by life and immortality brought to light by the gospel ; and the wrath of God revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.*

END OF PART FIRST.

THE  
**ANALOGY OF RELIGION**  
TO THE  
CONSTITUTION AND COURSE OF NATURE.

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**PART II.**  
**OF REVEALED RELIGION.**

**CHAP. I.**  
**OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CHRISTIANITY.**

SOME persons, upon pretence of the sufficiency of the light of nature, avowedly reject all revelation, as, in its very notion, incredible, and what must be fictitious. And, indeed, it is certain no revelation would have been given, had the light of nature been sufficient in such a sense as to render one not wanting and useless. But no man in seriousness and simplicity of mind can possibly think it so, who considers the state of religion in the heathen world before revelation, and its present state in those places which have borrowed no light from it ; particularly, the doubtfulness of some of the greatest men concerning things of the utmost importance, as well as the natural inattention and ignorance of mankind in general. It is impossible to say who would have been able to have reasoned out that whole system which we call natural religion, in its genuine simplicity, clear of superstition ; but there is certainly no ground to affirm that the generality could : if they could, there is no sort of probability that they would. Admitting there were, they would highly want a standing admonition, to remind them of it, and inculcate it upon them. And farther still, were they as much disposed to attend to religion as the better sort of men are, yet, even upon this supposition, there would be various occasions for supernatural instruction and assistance, and the greatest advantages might be afforded by them.

o that to say, revelation is a thing superfluous, what there was no need of, and what can be of no service, is, I think, to talk quite wildly and at random. Nor would it be more extravagant to affirm, that mankind is so entirely at ease in the present state, and life so completely happy, that it is a contradiction to suppose our condition capable of being in any respect better.

There are other persons, not to be ranked with these, whom we seem to be getting into a way of neglecting, and, as it were, overlooking revelation, as of small importance, provided natural religion be kept to. With little regard, either to the evidence for the former, or to the objections against it, and even upon the supposition of its truth, "The only design of it," say they, must be to establish a belief of the moral system of nature, and to enforce the practice of natural piety and virtue. The belief and practice of these things were perhaps, much promoted by the first publication of Christianity; but whether they are believed and practised, upon the evidence and motives of nature or of revelation, is no great matter."\* This way of considering revelation, though it is not the same with the former, yet borders nearly upon it, and very much, at length, runs up into it, and requires to be particularly considered, with regard to the persons who seem to be getting into this way. The consideration of it will, likewise, farther show the extravagance of the former opinion, and the truth of the objections in answer to it, just mentioned. And an inquiry into the importance of Christianity, cannot be an improper introduction to a treatise concerning the credibility of it.

Now, if God has given a revelation to mankind, and commanded those things which are commanded in Christianity, it is evident, at first sight, that it cannot in anywise be an indifferent matter, whether we obey or disobey those commands: unless we are certainly assured, that we know all the reasons for them, and that all those reasons are now ceased, with regard to mankind in general, or to ourselves in particular. And it is absolutely impossible we can be assured of this; for our ignorance of these reasons proves nothing in the case, since

*Invenis multos—propterea nolle fieri Christianos, quia quasi sufficiunt de bona vita sua. Bene vivere opus est, ait. Quod mihi præcepturus Christus? Ut bene vivam? Jam bene vivo. Quid mihi necessarius est iustus? Nullum homicidium, nullum furtum, nullam rapinam facio, res meas non concupisco, nullo adulterio contaminor. Nam invenitur in vita aliquid quod reprehendatur, et qui reprehenderit faciat Christianum.—*  
in *Psalm. xxxi.*



the whole analogy of nature shows, what is indeed in itself evident, that there may be infinite reasons for things, with which we are not acquainted.

But the importance of Christianity will more distinctly appear, by considering it more distinctly: *First*, As a republication, and external institution, of natural or essential religion, adapted to the present circumstances of mankind, and intended to promote natural piety and virtue; and, *secondly*, As containing an account of a dispensation of things, not discoverable by reason, in consequence of which several distinct precepts are enjoined us. For, though natural religion is the foundation and principal part of Christianity, it is not in any sense the whole of it.

1. Christianity is a republication of natural religion. It instructs mankind in the moral system of the world: That it is the work of an infinitely perfect Being, and under his government; that virtue is his law; and that he will finally judge mankind in righteousness, and render to all according to their works, in a future state. And, which is very material, it teaches natural religion in its genuine simplicity, free from those superstitions with which it was totally corrupted, and under which it was in a manner lost.

Revelation is, farther, an authoritative publication of natural religion, and so affords the evidence of testimony for the truth of it. Indeed the miracles and prophecies recorded in Scripture, were intended to prove a particular dispensation of Providence—the redemption of the world by the Messiah; but this does not hinder but that they may also prove God's general providence over the world, as our Moral Governor and Judge. And they evidently do prove it; because this character of the Author of nature is necessarily connected with, and implied in that particular revealed dispensation of things: it is likewise continually taught expressly, and insisted upon, by those persons who wrought the miracles and delivered the prophecies. So that, indeed, natural religion seems as much proved by the Scripture revelation, as it would have been, had the design of revelation been nothing else than to prove it.

But it may possibly be disputed, how far miracles can prove natural religion; and notable objections may be urged against this proof of it, considered as a matter of speculation; but, considered as a practical thing, there can be none. For, suppose a person to teach natural religion to a nation, who had lived in total ignorance or forgetfulness of it, and to declare he was commissioned by God so to do: suppose him, in proof of his

commission, to foretel things future, which no human foresight could have guessed at; to divide the sea with a word; feed great multitudes with bread from heaven; cure all manner of diseases; and raise the dead, even himself, to life; would not this give additional credibility to his teaching, and credibility beyond what that of a common man would have, and be an authoritative publication of the law of nature, *i. e.* a new proof of it? It would be a practical one of the strongest kind, perhaps, which human creatures are capable of having given them. The law of Moses then, and the gospel of Christ, are authoritative publications of the religion of nature; they afford a proof of God's general providence, as moral Governor of the world, as well as of his particular dispensations of providence towards sinful creatures, revealed in the law and the gospel. As they are the only evidence of the latter, so they are an additional evidence of the former.

To show this further, let us suppose a man of the greatest and most improved capacity, who had never heard of revelation, convinced upon the whole, notwithstanding the disorders of the world, that it was under the direction and moral government of an infinitely perfect Being, but ready to question, whether he were not got beyond the reach of his faculties; suppose him brought, by this suspicion, into great danger of being carried away by the universal bad example of almost every one around him, who appeared to have no sense, no practical sense at least, of these things; and this, perhaps, would be as advantageous a situation, with regard to religion, as nature alone ever placed any man in. What a confirmation now must it be to such a person, all at once to find, that this moral system of things was revealed to mankind, in the name of that infinite Being whom he had, from principles of reason, believed in; and that the publishers of the revelation proved their commission from him, by making it appear that he had intrusted them with a power of suspending and changing the general laws of nature?

Nor must it, by any means, be omitted, for it is a thing of the utmost importance, that life and immortality are eminently brought to light by the gospel. The great doctrines of a future state, the danger of a course of wickedness, and the efficacy of repentance, are not only confirmed in the gospel, but are taught, especially the last is, with a degree of light, to which that of nature is but darkness.

Farther: As Christianity served these ends and purposes, when

it was first published, by the miraculous publication itself; so it was intended to serve the same purposes, in future ages, by means of the settlement of a visible church; of a society, distinguished from common ones, and from the rest of the world, by peculiar religious institutions; by an instituted method of instruction, and an instituted form of external religion. Miraculous powers were given to the first preachers of Christianity, in order to their introducing it into the world; a visible church was established, in order to continue it, and carry it on successively throughout all ages. Had Moses and the Prophets, Christ and his Apostles, only taught, and by miracles proved, religion to their contemporaries, the benefits of their instructions would have reached but to a small part of mankind. Christianity must have been, in a great degree, sunk and forgot in a very few ages. To prevent this, appears to have been one reason why a visible church was instituted; to be like a city upon a hill, a standing memorial to the world of the duty which we owe our Maker; to call men continually, both by example and instruction, to attend to it, and, by the form of religion ever before their eyes, remind them of the reality; to be the repository of the oracles of God; to hold up the light of revelation in aid to that of nature, and propagate it throughout all generations to the end of the world—the light of revelation, considered here in no other view, than as designed to enforce natural religion. And, in proportion as Christianity is professed and taught in the world, religion, natural or essential religion, is thus distinctly and advantageously laid before mankind, and brought again and again to their thoughts, as a matter of infinite importance. A visible church has also a farther tendency to promote natural religion, as being an instituted method of education, originally intended to be of more peculiar advantage to those who would conform to it. For one end of the institution was, that, by admonition and reproof, as well as instruction; by a general regular discipline, and public exercises of religion, *the body of Christ*, as the Scripture speaks, should be *edified*; i. e. trained up in piety and virtue, for a higher and better state. This settlement, then, appearing thus beneficial, tending, in the nature of the thing, to answer, and, in some degree, actually answering, those ends; it is to be remembered, that the very notion of it implies positive institutions; for the visibility of the church consists in them. Take away every thing of this kind, and you lose the very notion itself. So that, if the things now mentioned are advantages, the reason and import-

ance of positive institutions in general is most obvious ; since, without them, these advantages could not be secured to the world. And it is mere idle wantonness, to insist upon knowing the reasons why such particular ones were fixed upon rather than others.

The benefit arising from this supernatural assistance which Christianity affords to natural religion, is what some persons are very slow in apprehending ; and yet it is a thing distinct in itself, and a very plain obvious one. For will any, in good earnest, really say, that the bulk of mankind in the heathen world were in as advantageous a situation, with regard to natural religion, as they are now amongst us ? that it was laid before them, and enforced upon them, in a manner as distinct, and as much tending to influence their practice ?

The objections against all this, from the perversion of Christianity, and from the supposition of its having had but little good influence, however innocently they may be proposed, yet cannot be insisted upon as conclusive, upon any principles but such as lead to downright atheism ; because the manifestation of the law of nature, by reason, which, upon all principles of theism, must have been from God, has been perverted and rendered ineffectual in the same manner. It may indeed, I think, truly be said, that the good effects of Christianity have not been small ; nor its supposed ill effects, any effects at all of it, properly speaking. Perhaps too, the things themselves done have been aggravated ; and if not, Christianity hath been often only a pretence ; and the same evils, in the main, would have been done upon some other pretence. However, great and shocking as the corruptions and abuses of it have really been, they cannot be insisted upon as arguments against it, upon principles of theism. For one cannot proceed one step in reasoning upon natural religion, any more than upon Christianity, without laying it down as a first principle, that the dispensations of Providence are not to be judged of by their perversions, but by their genuine tendencies ; not by what they do actually seem to effect, but by what they would effect if mankind did their part ; that part which is justly put and left upon them. It is altogether as much the language of one, as of the other : *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he that is holy, let him be holy still.* (Rev. xxii. 11.) The light of reason does not, any more than that of revelation, force men to submit to its authority : both admonish them of what they ought to do and avoid, together with the consequences of each ; and, after this, leave them at full liberty to act just as they please, till the ap-

pointed time of judgment. Every moment's experience shows, that this is God's general rule of government.

To return, then ; Christianity being a promulgation of the law of nature ; being, moreover, an authoritative promulgation of it, with new light, and other circumstances of peculiar advantage, adapted to the wants of mankind ; these things fully show its importance. And it is to be observed farther, that as the nature of the case requires, so all Christians are commanded to contribute, by their profession of Christianity, to preserve it in the world, and render it such a promulgation and enforcement of religion. For it is the very scheme of the gospel, that each Christian should, in his degree, contribute towards continuing and carrying it on ; all by uniting in the public profession and external practice of Christianity ; some by instructing, by having the oversight, and taking care of this religious community, the church of God. Now this farther shows the importance of Christianity, and, which is what I chiefly intend, its importance in a practical sense, or the high obligations we are under, to take it into our most serious consideration ; and the danger there must necessarily be, not only in treating it despitefully, which I am not now speaking of, but in disregarding and neglecting it. For this is neglecting to do what is expressly enjoined us, for continuing those benefits to the world, and transmitting them down to future times. And all this holds, even though the only thing to be considered in Christianity, were its subserviency to natural religion. But,

II. Christianity is to be considered in a further view, as containing an account of a dispensation of things, not at all discoverable by reason, in consequence of which several distinct precepts are enjoined us. Christianity is not only an external institution of natural religion, and a new promulgation of God's general providence, as righteous Governor and Judge of the world ; but it contains also a revelation of a particular dispensation of Providence, carrying on by his Son and Spirit, for the recovery and salvation of mankind, who are represented, in Scripture, to be in a state of ruin. And, in consequence of this revelation being made, we are commanded *to be baptized*, not only *in the name of the Father*, but also *of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost* ; and other obligations of duty, unknown before, to the Son and the Holy Ghost, are revealed. Now, the importance of these duties may be judged of, by observing that they arise, not from positive command merely, but also from the offices which appear, from Scripture, to belong to those divine persons in the gospel dispensation, or from the relations

1, we are there informed, they stand in to us. By reason revealed the relation which God the Father stands in to us. He arises the obligation of duty which we are under to him. Scripture are revealed the relations which the Son and Holy Ghost stand in to us. Hence arise the obligations of duty which we are under to them. The truth of the case, as one may speak, in each of these three respects, being admitted, that God is the governor of the world, upon the evidence of reason ; Christ is the Mediator between God and man, and the Holy Ghost our guide and sanctifier, upon the evidence of revelation ; the truth of the case, I say, in each of these respects, being admitted, it is no more a question, why it should be commanded that we be baptized in the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, than that we be baptized in the name of the Father. This matter seems to require to be more fully stated.\* Let it be remembered, then, that religion comes under the twofold consideration of internal and external ; for the latter is really a part of religion, of true religion, as the former. Now, when religion is considered under the first notion, as an inward principle, to be exerted in such and such inward acts of the mind and heart, the essence of natural religion may be said to consist in religious regards to *God the Father Almighty* ; and the essence of revealed religion, as distinguished from natural, consists in religious regards to *the Son*, and to *the Holy Ghost*. In the obligation we are under, of paying these religious regards to each of these divine persons respectively, arises from the respective relations which they each stand in to us. How these relations are made known, whether by reason or revelation, makes no alteration in the case ; because the duties arise from the relations themselves, not out of the manner in which we are informed of them. The Son and Spirit have each his proper office in that great dispensation of Providence, the redemption of the world ; the one our Mediator, the other our Sanctifier. Does not, then, the duty of religious regards to these divine persons, as immediately arise, to the view of man, out of the very nature of these offices and relations, as inward good-will and kind intention, which we owe to our fellow-creatures, arises out of the common relations between us and them ? But it will be asked, “ What are the inward religious regards, appearing thus obviously due to the Son and Holy Spirit, as arising, not merely from command in Scrip-

See the Nature, Obligation, and Efficacy of the Christian Sacraments, and *Collier* on Revealed Religion, as there quoted.

ture, but from the very nature of the revealed relations which they stand in to us?" I answer, the religious regards of reverence, honour, love, trust, gratitude, fear, hope. In what external manner this inward worship is to be expressed, is a matter of pure revealed command; as perhaps, the external manner in which God the Father is to be worshipped, may be more so than we are ready to think; but the worship, the internal worship itself, to the Son and Holy Ghost, is no farther matter of pure revealed command, than as the relations they stand in to us are matter of pure revelation; for the relations being known, the obligations to such internal worship are obligations of reason, arising out of those relations themselves. In short, the history of the gospel as immediately shows us the reason of these obligations, as it shows us the meaning of the words, Son and Holy Ghost.

If this account of the Christian religion be just, those persons who can speak lightly of it, as of little consequence, provided natural religion be kept to, plainly forget, that Christianity, even what is peculiarly so called, as distinguished from natural religion, has yet somewhat very important, even of a moral nature. For the office of our Lord being made known, and the relation he stands in to us, the obligation of religious regards to him is plainly moral, as much as charity to mankind is; since this obligation arises, before external command, immediately out of that his office and relation itself. Those persons appear to forget, that revelation is to be considered as informing us of somewhat new in the state of mankind, and in the government of the world; as acquainting us with some relations we stand in, which could not otherwise have been known. And these relations being real, (though before revelation we could be under no obligations from them, yet upon their being revealed,) there is no reason to think, but that neglect of behaving suitably to them will be attended with the same kind of consequences under God's government, as neglecting to behave suitably to any other relations made known to us by reason. And ignorance, whether unavoidable or voluntary, so far as we can possibly see, will, just as much, and just as little, excuse in one case as in the other; the ignorance being supposed equally unavoidable, or equally voluntary, in both cases.

If, therefore, Christ be indeed the Mediator between God and man, *i. e.* if Christianity be true; if he be indeed our Lord, our Saviour, and our God, no one can say what may follow, not only the obstinate, but the careless, disregard to him



those high relations. Nay, no one can say what may follow his disregard, even in the way of natural consequence. (Pages 1, 254.) For, as the natural consequences of vice in this life are doubtless to be considered as judicial punishments inflicted by God, so likewise, for ought we know, the judicial punishments of the future life may be, in a like way, or a like sense, the natural consequence of vice, (chap. v.) of men's violating or disregarding the relations which God has placed them in here, and made known to them.

Again, if mankind are corrupted and depraved in their moral character, and so are unfit for that state which Christ is gone to prepare for his disciples; and if the assistance of God's Spirit is necessary to renew their nature, in the degree requisite to their being qualified for that state; all which is implied in the express, though figurative, declaration, *Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God*, John iii. 5; supposing this, is it possible any serious person can think it a light matter, whether or no he makes use of the means expressly commanded by God, for obtaining this divine assistance? especially since the whole analogy of nature shews, that we are not to expect any benefits, without making use of the appointed means for obtaining or enjoying them. Now reason shews us nothing of the particular immediate means of obtaining either temporal or spiritual benefits. This, therefore, we must learn, either from experience or revelation. And experience the present case does not admit of.

The conclusion from all this evidently is, that Christianity, if supposed either true or credible, it is unspeakable irreverence, and really the most presumptuous rashness, to treat it as a light matter. It can never justly be esteemed of little consequence, till it be positively supposed false. Nor do I know a higher and more important obligation which we are under, than that of examining most seriously into the evidence of it, supposing its credibility, and of embracing it, upon supposition of its truth.

The two following deductions may be proper to be added, in order to illustrate the foregoing observations, and to prevent our being mistaken.

*First*, Hence we may clearly see, where lies the distinction between what is positive and what is moral in religion. Moral precepts are precepts, the reasons of which we see; positive precepts are precepts, the reasons of which we do not see.\*

This is the distinction between moral and positive precepts, considered respectively as such. But yet, since the latter have somewhat of a moral



Moral *duties* arise out of the nature of the case itself, prior to external command. Positive *duties* do not arise out of the nature of the case, but from external command; nor would they be duties at all, were it not for such command received from him, whose creatures and subjects we are. But the manner in which the nature of the case, or the fact of the relation, is made known, this doth not denominate any duty, either positive or moral. That we be baptized in the name of the Father, is as much a positive duty as that we be baptised in the name of the Son; because both arise equally from revealed command; though the relation which we stand in to God the Father, is made known to us by reason; the relation we stand in to Christ, by revelation only. On the other hand, the dispensation of the gospel admitted, gratitude as immediately becomes due to Christ, from his being the voluntary minister of this dispensation, as it is due to God the Father, from his being the fountain of all good; though the first is made known to us by revelation only, the second by reason. Hence also we may see, and, for distinctness sake, it may be worth mentioning, that positive institutions come under a two-fold consideration. They are either institutions founded on natural religion, as baptism in the name of the Father; though this has also a particular reference to the gospel dispensation, for it is in the name of God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; or they are external institutions founded on revealed religion, as baptism in the name of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

*Secondly*, From the distinction between what is moral and what is positive in religion, appears the ground of that peculiar preference, which the Scripture teaches us to be due to the former.

The reason of positive institutions in general is very obvious, though we should not see the reason why such particular ones are pitched upon, rather than others. Whoever, therefore, instead of cavilling at words, will attend to the thing itself, may clearly see, that positive institutions in general, as distinguished from this or that particular one, have the nature of moral commands; since the reasons of them appear. Thus, for instance, the *external* worship of God is a moral duty, though no particular mode of it be so. Care then is to be taken, when a

nature, we may see the reason of them considered in this view. Moral and positive precepts are in some respects alike, in other respects different. So far as they are alike, we discern the reasons of both; so far as they are different, we discern the reasons of the former, but not of the latter. See p. 336, &c.

on is made between positive and moral duties, that compared no farther than as they are different ; no farther as the former are positive, or arise out of mere command, the reasons of which we are not acquainted with as the latter are moral, or arise out of the apparent case, without such external command. Unless this be observed, we shall run into endless confusion.

this being premised, suppose two standing precepts by the same authority ; that, in certain conjunctures, possible to obey both ; that the former is moral, *i. e.* a law of which we see the reasons, and that they hold in the present case before us ; but that the latter is positive, *i. e.* a law of which we do not see the reasons ; it is indisputable that obligations are to obey the former, because there is a reason for this preference, and none against it. Farther, positive institutions, I suppose all those which Christ enjoins, are means to a moral end ; and the end must be judged more excellent than the means. Nor is observed in these institutions any religious obedience at all, or any value, otherwise than as it proceeds from a moral law. This seems to be the strict logical way of stating and determining this matter ; but will, perhaps, be found less agreeable to practice, than may be thought at first sight.

Therefore, in a more practical, though more lax way of consideration, and taking the words, *moral law* and *positive institutions*, in the popular sense ; I add, that the whole moral law is much matter of revealed command, as positive institutions are ; for the Scripture enjoins every moral virtue. In respect, then, they are both upon a level. But the moral law moreover, written upon our hearts ; interwoven into our nature. And this is a plain intimation of the Author of nature, that the moral law is to be preferred, when they interfere.

There is not altogether so much necessity for the determination of this question as some persons seem to think. Nor is it left to reason alone to determine it. For, *first*, Though I have, in all ages, been greatly prone to place their value in peculiar positive rites, by way of equivalent for obeying moral precepts ; yet, without making any comparison between them, and consequently, without determining which to have the preference, the nature of the thing abundantly shews all notions of that kind to be utterly subversive of religion ; as they are, moreover, contrary to the whole genius of Scripture, and likewise to the most express declarations of it, that nothing can render us accepted

of God, without moral virtue. *Secondly*, Upon the occasion of mentioning together positive and moral duties, the Scripture always puts the stress of religion upon the latter, and never upon the former; which, though no sort of allowance to neglect the former, when they do not interfere with the latter, yet is a plain intimation, that when they do, the latter are to be preferred. And, farther, as mankind are for placing the stress of their religion any where, rather than upon virtue, lest both the reason of the thing, and the general spirit of Christianity, appearing in the intimation now mentioned, should be ineffectual against this prevalent folly; our Lord himself, from whose command alone the obligation of positive institutions arises, has taken occasion to make the comparison between them and moral precepts, when the Pharisees censured him for *eating with publicans and sinners*; and also when they censured his disciples for *plucking the ears of corn on the Sabbath-day*. Upon this comparison he has determined expressly, and in form, which shall have the preference when they interfere. And by delivering his authoritative determination in a proverbial manner of expression, he has made it general: *I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*. (Matt. ix. 13. and xii. 7.) The propriety of the word *proverbial* is not the thing insisted upon, though, I think, the manner of speaking is to be called so. But that the manner of speaking very remarkably renders the determination general, is surely indisputable. For, had it, in the latter case, been said only, that God preferred mercy to the rigid observance of the Sabbath, even then, by parity of reason, most justly might we have argued, that he preferred mercy, likewise, to the observance of other ritual institutions, and, in general, moral duties to positive ones. And thus the determination would have been general, though its being so were inferred, and not expressed. But as the passage really stands in the gospel, it is much stronger; for the sense, and the very literal words of our Lord's answer, are as applicable to any other instance of a comparison, between positive and moral duties, as to this upon which they were spoken. And if, in case of competition, mercy is to be preferred to positive institutions, it will scarce be thought, that justice is to give place to them. It is remarkable too, that, as the words are a quotation from the Old Testament, they are introduced, on both the forementioned occasions, with a declaration, that the Pharisees did not understand the meaning of them. This, I say, is very remarkable; for, since it is scarce possible for the most ignorant person not to understand the literal sense of the pas-

ge in the Prophet, (Hos. vi.) and since understanding the literal sense would not have prevented their *condemning the millless*, (see Matt. xii. 7.) it can hardly be doubted, that the thing which our Lord really intended in that declaration was, that the Pharisees had not learnt from it, as they might, herein the *general* spirit of religion consists; that it consists in moral piety and virtue, as distinguished from forms and ritual observances. However, it is certain we may learn this from his divine application of the passage, in the gospel.

But, as it is one of the peculiar weaknesses of human nature, when, upon a comparison of two things, one is found to be of greater importance than the other, to consider this other as of scarce any importance at all; it is highly necessary that we remind ourselves, how great presumption it is to make light of any institutions of divine appointment; that our obligations to obey all God's commands whatever, are absolute and indispensable; and that commands merely positive, admitted to be from him, lay us under a moral obligation to obey them; an obligation moral in the strictest and most proper sense.

To these things I cannot forbear adding, that the account now given of Christianity most strongly shews and enforces upon us the obligation of searching the Scriptures, in order to see what the scheme of revelation really is, instead of determining beforehand, from reason, what the scheme of it must be. (Chap. iii.) Indeed, if in revelation there be found any passages, the seeming meaning of which is contrary to natural religion, we may most certainly conclude such seeming meaning not to be the real one. But it is not any degree of a presumption against an interpretation of Scripture, that such interpretation contains a doctrine, which the light of nature cannot discover, (pages 346, 347.) or a precept, which the law of nature does not oblige to.

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## CHAP. II.

### OF THE SUPPOSED PRESUMPTION AGAINST A REVELATION, CONSIDERED AS MIRACULOUS.

HAVING shewn the importance of the Christian revelation, and the obligations which we are under seriously to attend to it; upon

supposition of its truth or its credibility ; the next thing in order is, to consider the supposed presumptions against revelation in general, which shall be the subject of this chapter ; and the objections against the Christian in particular, which shall be the subject of some following ones. (Chap. iii.—vi.) For it seems the most natural method to remove these prejudices against Christianity, before we proceed to the consideration of the positive evidence for it, and the objections against that evidence. (Chap. vii.)

It is, I think, commonly supposed, that there is some peculiar presumption, from the analogy of nature, against the Christian scheme of things, at least against miracles ; so as that stronger evidence is necessary to prove the truth and reality of them, than would be sufficient to convince us of other events or matters of fact. Indeed, the consideration of this supposed presumption cannot but be thought very insignificant by many persons ; yet, as it belongs to the subject of this treatise, so it may tend to open the mind, and remove some prejudices ; however needless the consideration of it be, upon its own account.

I. I find no appearance of a presumption, from the analogy of nature, against the general scheme of Christianity, that God created and invisibly governs the world by Jesus Christ, and by him also will hereafter judge it in righteousness, *i. e.* render to every one according to his works ; and that good men are under the secret influence of his Spirit. Whether these things are, or are not, to be called miraculous, is, perhaps, only a question about words ; or, however, is of no moment in the case. If the analogy of nature raises any presumption against this general scheme of Christianity, it must be, either because it is not discoverable by reason or experience, or else because it is unlike that course of nature, which is. But analogy raises no presumption against the truth of this scheme, upon either of these accounts.

*First,* There is no presumption, from analogy, against the truth of it, upon account of its not being discoverable by reason or experience. For, suppose one who never heard of revelation, of the most improved understanding, and acquainted with our whole system of natural philosophy and natural religion ; such an one could not but be sensible, that it was but a very small part of the natural and moral system of the universe, which he was acquainted with. He could not but be sensible, that there must be innumerable things, in the dispensations of Providence past, in the invisible government over the world at present car-

rying on, and in what is to come, of which he was wholly ignorant, (page 320.) and which could not be discovered without revelation. Whether the scheme of nature be, in the strictest sense, infinite or not, it is evidently vast, even beyond all possible imagination. And, doubtless, that part of it which is opened to our view, is but as a point, in comparison of the whole plan of Providence, reaching throughout eternity, past and future; in comparison of what is even now going on in the remote parts of the boundless universe; nay, in comparison of the whole scheme of this world. And, therefore, that things lie beyond the natural reach of our faculties, is no sort of presumption against the truth and reality of them; because it is certain, there are innumerable things, in the constitution and government of the universe, which are thus beyond the natural reach of our faculties. *Secondly*, Analogy raises no presumption against any of the things contained in this general doctrine of Scripture now mentioned, upon account of their being unlike the known course of nature. For there is no presumption at all, from analogy, that the *whole* course of things, or divine government, naturally unknown to us, and *every thing* in it, is like to any thing in that which is known; and, therefore, no peculiar presumption against any thing in the former, upon account of its being unlike to any thing in the latter. And in the constitution and natural government of the world, as well as in the moral government of it, we see things, in a great degree, unlike one another; and therefore ought not to wonder at such unlikeness between things visible and invisible. However, the scheme of Christianity is by no means entirely unlike the scheme of nature; as will appear in the following part of this treatise.

The notion of a miracle, considered as a proof of a divine mission, has been stated with great exactness by divines; and is, I think, sufficiently understood by every one. There are also invisible miracles; the incarnation of Christ, for instance, which, being secret, cannot be alleged as a proof of such a mission; but require themselves to be proved by visible miracles. Revelation, itself, too, is miraculous, and miracles are the proof of it; and the supposed presumption against these shall presently be considered. All which I have been observing here is, that, whether we choose to call every thing in the dispensations of Providence, not discoverable without revelation, nor like the known course of things, miraculous; and whether the general Christian dispensation now mentioned, is to be called so, or not; the foregoing observations seem certainly to show,

that there is no presumption against it, from the analogy of nature.

II. There is no presumption, from analogy, against some operations, which we should now call miraculous; particularly, none against a revelation, at the beginning of the world; nothing of such presumption against it, as is supposed to be implied or expressed in the word *miraculous*. For a miracle, in its very notion, is relative to a course of nature; and implies somewhat different from it, considered as being so. Now, either there was no course of nature at the time which we are speaking of; or if there were, we are not acquainted what the course of nature is upon the first peopling of worlds. And therefore the question, whether mankind had a revelation made to them at that time, is to be considered, not as a question concerning a miracle, but as a common question of fact. And we have the like reason, be it more or less, to admit the report of tradition concerning this question, and concerning common matters of fact of the same antiquity; for instance, what part of the earth was first peopled.

Or thus: when mankind was first placed in this state, there was a power exerted, totally different from the present course of nature. Now, whether this power, thus wholly different from the present course of nature; for we cannot properly apply to it the word *miraculous*; whether this power stopped immediately after it had made man, or went on, and exerted itself farther in giving him a revelation, is a question of the same kind, as whether an ordinary power exerted itself in such a particular degree and manner, or not.

Or suppose the power exerted in the formation of the world be considered as miraculous, or rather, be called by that name, the case will not be different; since it must be acknowledged, that such a power was exerted. For, supposing it acknowledged that our Saviour spent some years in a course of working miracles; there is no more presumption, worth mentioning, against his having exerted this miraculous power, in a certain degree greater, than in a certain degree less; in one or two more instances, than in one or two fewer; in this, than in another manner.

It is evident, then, that there can be no peculiar presumption, from the analogy of nature, against supposing a revelation, when man was first placed upon the earth.

Add, that there does not appear the least intimation in history or tradition, that religion was first reasoned out; but the whole of history and tradition makes for the other side, that it



came into the world by revelation. Indeed, the state of religion in the first ages, of which we have any account, seems to suppose and imply, that this was the original of it amongst mankind. And these reflections together, without taking in the peculiar authority of Scripture, amount to real and a very material degree of evidence, that there was a revelation at the beginning of the world. Now this, as it is a confirmation of natural religion, and therefore mentioned in the former part of this treatise ; (page 314, &c.) so, likewise, it has a tendency to remove any prejudices against a subsequent revelation.

III. But still it may be objected, that there is some peculiar presumption, from analogy, against miracles ; particularly against revelation, after the settlement and during the continuance of a course of nature.

Now, with regard to this supposed presumption, it is to be observed in general, that before we can have ground for raising what can, with any propriety, be called an *argument* from analogy, for or against revelation considered as somewhat miraculous, we must be acquainted with a similar or parallel case. But the history of some other world, seemingly in like circumstances with our own, is no more than a parallel case ; and therefore, nothing short of this can be so. Yet, could we come at a presumptive proof, for or against a revelation, from being informed whether such world had one, or not ; such a proof, being drawn from one single instance only, must be infinitely precarious. More particularly : First of all, there is a very strong presumption against common speculative truths, and against the most ordinary facts, before the proof of them ; which yet is overcome by almost any proof. There is a presumption of millions to one, against the story of *Caesar*, or of any other man. For suppose a number of common facts so and so circumstanced, of which one had no kind of proof, should happen to come into one's thoughts ; every one would, without any possible doubt, conclude them to be false. And the like may be said of a single common fact. And from hence it appears, that the question of importance, as to the matter before us, is, concerning the degree of the peculiar presumption supposed against miracles ; not whether there be any peculiar presumption at all against them. For, if there be the presumption of millions to one, against the most common facts, what can a small presumption, additional to this, amount to, though it be peculiar ? It cannot be estimated, and is as nothing. The only material question is, whether there be any such presumption against miracles, as to render them in any sort incredible ? *Secondly*, If we leave



out the consideration of religion, we are in such total darkness, upon what causes, occasions, reasons, or circumstances, the present course of nature depends, that there does not appear any improbability for or against supposing, that five or six thousand years may have given scope for causes, occasions, reasons, or circumstances, from whence miraculous interpositions may have arisen. And from this, joined with the foregoing observation, it will follow, that there must be a presumption, beyond all comparison, greater, against the *particular* common facts just now instanced in, than against miracles *in general* ; before any evidence of either. But, *thirdly*, take in the consideration of religion, or the moral system of the world, and then we see distinct particular reasons for miracles ; to afford mankind instruction additional to that of nature, and to attest the truth of it. And this gives a real credibility to the supposition, that it might be part of the original plan of things, that there should be miraculous interpositions. Then, *lastly*, miracles must not be compared to common natural events ; or to events which, though uncommon, are similar to what we daily experience ; but to the extraordinary phenomena of nature. And then the comparison will be, between the presumption against miracles, and the presumption against such uncommon appearances, suppose, as comets, and against there being any such powers in nature as magnetism and electricity, so contrary to the properties of other bodies not endued with these powers. And before any one can determine, whether there be any peculiar presumption against miracles, more than against other extraordinary things, he must consider, what, upon first hearing, would be the presumption against the last-mentioned appearances and powers, to a person acquainted only with the daily, monthly, and annual course of nature respecting this earth, and with those common powers of matter which we every day see.

Upon all this I conclude, that there certainly is no such presumption against miracles, as to render them in anywise incredible ; that, on the contrary, our being able to discern reasons for them, gives a positive credibility to the history of them, in cases where those reasons hold ; and that it is by no means certain, that there is any peculiar presumption at all, from analogy, even in the lowest degree, against miracles, as distinguished from other extraordinary phenomena ; though it is not worth while to perplex the reader with inquiries into the abstract nature of evidence, in order to determine a question, which, without such inquiries, we see is of no importance.

## CHAP. III.

OF OUR INCAPACITY OF JUDGING, WHAT WERE TO BE EXPECTED IN A REVELATION ; AND THE CREDIBILITY FROM ANALOGY, THAT IT MUST CONTAIN THINGS APPEARING LIABLE TO OBJECTIONS.

BESIDES the objections against the evidence for Christianity, many are alleged against the scheme of it ; against the whole manner in which it is put forth and left with the world ; as well as against several particular relations in Scripture ; objections drawn from the deficiencies of revelation ; from things in it appearing to men *foolishness*, (1 Cor. i. 28 ; ) from its containing matters of offence, which have led, and it must have been foreseen would lead, into strange enthusiasm and superstition, and be made to serve the purposes of tyranny and wickedness ; from its not being universal ; and, which is a thing of the same kind, from its evidence not being so convincing and satisfactory as it might have been ; for this last is sometimes turned into a positive argument against its truth. (See chap. vi.) It would be tedious, indeed impossible, to enumerate the several particulars comprehended under the objections here referred to, they being so various, according to the different fancies of men. There are persons, who think it a strong objection against the authority of Scripture, that it is not composed by rules of art, agreed upon by critics, for polite and correct writing. And the scorn is inexpressible, with which some of the prophetic parts of Scripture are treated ; partly through the rashness of interpreters, but very much also on account of the hieroglyphical and figurative language in which they are left us. Some of the principal things of this sort shall be particularly considered in the following Chapters. But my design at present is to observe, in general, with respect to this whole way of arguing, that, upon supposition of a revelation, it is highly credible beforehand, we should be incompetent judges of it, to a great degree ; and that it would contain many things appearing to us liable to great objections, in case we judge of it otherwise than by the analogy of nature. And, therefore, though objections against the evidence of Christianity are more seriously to be considered, yet objections against Christianity itself are, in a great measure, frivolous ;

almost all objections against it, excepting those which are alleged against the particular proofs of its coming from God. I express myself with caution, lest I should be mistaken to vilify reason, which is indeed the only faculty we have wherewith to judge concerning any thing, even revelation itself; or be misunderstood to assert, that a supposed revelation cannot be proved false from internal characters. For, it may contain clear immoralities or contradictions; and either of these would prove it false. Nor will I take it upon me to affirm, that nothing else can possibly render any supposed revelation incredible. Yet still the observation above is, I think, true beyond doubt, that objections against Christianity, as distinguished from objections against its evidence, are frivolous. To make out this, is the general design of the present chapter. And, with regard to the whole of it, I cannot but particularly wish, that the proofs might be attended to, rather than the assertions cavilled at, upon account of any unacceptable consequences, whether real or supposed, which may be drawn from them. For, after all, that which is true, must be admitted; though it should shew us the shortness of our faculties, and that we are in nowise judges of many things, of which we are apt to think ourselves very competent ones. Nor will this be any objection with reasonable men; at least, upon second thought, it will not be any objection with such, against the justness of the following observations.

As God governs the world, and instructs his creatures, according to certain laws or rules, in the known course of nature, known by reason together with experience; so the Scripture informs us of a scheme of Divine Providence additional to this. It relates, that God has, by revelation, instructed men in things concerning his government, which they could not otherwise have known, and reminded them of things which they might otherwise know, and attested the truth of the whole by miracles. Now, if the natural and the revealed dispensation of things are both from God, if they coincide with each other, and together make up one scheme of Providence, our being incompetent judges of one must render it credible that we may be incompetent judges also of the other. Since, upon experience, the acknowledged constitution and course of nature is found to be greatly different from what, before experience, would have been expected; and such as, men fancy, there lie great objections against: This renders it beforehand highly credible, that they may find the revealed dispensation likewise, if they judge of it as they do of the constitution of nature.

very different from expectations formed beforehand ; and liable, in appearance, to great objections ; objections against the scheme itself, and against the degrees and manners of the miraculous interpositions, by which it was attested and carried on. Thus, suppose a prince to govern his dominions in the wisest manner possible, by common known laws ; and that upon some exigencies he should suspend these laws, and govern, in several instances, in a different manner : If one of his subjects were not a competent judge beforehand, by what common rules the government should or would be carried on, it could not be expected that the same person would be a competent judge, in what exigencies, or in what manner, or to what degree, those laws commonly observed would be suspended or deviated from. If he were not a judge of the wisdom of the ordinary administration, there is no reason to think he would be a judge of the wisdom of the extraordinary. If he thought he had objections against the former, doubtless, it is highly supposable, he might think also, that he had objections against the latter. And thus, as we fall into infinite follies and mistakes, whenever we pretend, otherwise than from experience and analogy, to judge of the constitution and course of nature, it is evidently supposable beforehand, that we should fall into as great, in pretending to judge, in like manner, concerning revelation. Nor is there any more ground to expect that this latter should appear to us clear of objections, than that the former should.

These observations, relating to the whole of Christianity, are applicable to inspiration in particular. As we are in no sort judges beforehand, by what laws or rules, in what degree, or by what means, it were to have been expected that God would naturally instruct us ; so, upon supposition of his affording us light and instruction by revelation, additional to what he has afforded us by reason and experience, we are in no sort judges, by what methods, and in what proportion, it were to be expected that this supernatural light and instruction would be afforded us. We know not beforehand, what degree or kind of natural information it were to be expected God would afford men, each by his own reason and experience ; nor how far he would enable, and effectually dispose them to communicate it, whatever it should be, to each other ; nor whether the evidence of it would be certain, highly probable, or doubtful ; nor whether it would be given with equal clearness and conviction to all. Nor could we guess, upon any good ground I mean, whether natural knowledge, or even the faculty itself by which we are capable of attaining it, reason, would be given us at once, or

gradually. In like manner, we are wholly ignorant what degree of new knowledge, it were to be expected, God would give mankind, by revelation, upon supposition of his affording one; or how far, or in what way, he would interpose miraculously, to qualify them, to whom he should originally make the revelation, for communicating the knowledge given by it; and to secure their doing it to the age in which they should live, and to secure its being transmitted to posterity. We are equally ignorant, whether the evidence of it would be certain, or highly probable or doubtful; (see Chap. vi.) or whether all who should have any degree of instruction from it, and any degree of evidence of its truth, would have the same; or whether the scheme would be revealed at once, or unfolded gradually. Nay, we are not in any sort able to judge, whether it were to have been expected, that the revelation should have been committed to writing; or left to be handed down, and consequently corrupted, by verbal tradition, and at length sunk under it, if mankind so pleased, and during such time as they are permitted, in the degree they evidently are, to act as they will.

But it may be said, "that a revelation in some of the above-mentioned circumstances; one, for instance, which was not committed to writing, and thus secured against danger of corruption, would not have answered its purpose." I ask, what purpose? It would not have answered all the purposes which it has now answered, and in the same degree; but it would have answered others, or the same in different degrees. And which of these were the purposes of God, and best fell in with his general government, we could not at all have determined beforehand.

Now, since it has been shewn, that we have no principles of reason upon which to judge beforehand, how it were to be expected revelation should have been left, or what was most suitable to the divine plan of government, in any of the fore-mentioned respects; it must be quite frivolous to object afterwards as to any of them, against its being left in one way, rather than another: for this would be to object against things, upon account of their being different from expectations, which have been shewn to be without reason. And thus, we see, that the only question concerning the truth of Christianity is, whether it be a real revelation; not whether it be attended with every circumstance which we should have looked for; and concerning the authority of Scripture, whether it be what it claims to be; not whether it be a book of such sort, and so promulgated, as weak men are apt to fancy a book containing a divine

revelation should. And therefore, neither obscurity, nor seeming inaccuracy of style, nor various readings, nor early disputes about the authors of particular parts, nor any other things of the like kind, though they had been much more considerable in degree than they are, could overthrow the authority of the Scripture; unless the Prophets, Apostles, or our Lord, had promised, that the book, containing the divine revelation, should be secure from those things. Nor indeed can any objections overthrow such a kind of revelation as the Christian claims to be, since there are no objections against the morality of it, (page 360.) but such as can shew, that there is no proof of miracles wrought originally in attestation of it; no appearance of any thing miraculous in its obtaining in the world: nor any of prophecy, that is, of events foretold, which human sagacity could not foresee. If it can be shewn, that the proof alleged for all these is absolutely none at all, then is revelation overturned. But were it allowed, that the proof of any one, or all of them, is lower than is allowed; yet whilst any proof of them remains, revelation will stand upon much the same foot it does at present, as to all the purposes of life and practice, and ought to have the like influence upon our behaviour.

From the foregoing observations, too, it will follow, and those who will thoroughly examine into revelation will find it worth remarking, that there are several ways of arguing, which, though just with regard to other writings, are not applicable to Scripture; at least not to the prophetic parts of it. We cannot argue, for instance, that this cannot be the sense or intent of such a passage of Scripture, for if it had, it would have been expressed more plainly, or have been represented under a more apt figure or hieroglyphic; yet we may justly argue thus, with respect to common books. And the reason of this difference is very evident; that in Scripture we are not competent judges, as we are in common books, how plainly it were to have been expected, what is the true sense should have been expressed, or under how apt an image figured. The only question is, what appearance there is that this is the sense? and scarce at all, how much more determinately or accurately it might have been expressed or figured?

“But is it not self-evident, that internal improbabilities of all kinds, weaken external probable proof?” Doubtless. But to what practical purpose can this be alleged here, when it has been proved before, (page 349,) that real internal improbabilities, which rise even to moral certainty, are overcome by the most ordinary testimony? and when it now has been made appear,

that we scarce know what are improbabilities, as to the matter we are here considering : as it will farther appear from what follows.

For though, from the observations above made, it is manifest, that we are not in any sort competent judges, what supernatural instruction were to have been expected ; and though it is self-evident, that the objections of an incompetent judgment must be frivolous ; yet it may be proper to go one step farther, and observe that if men will be regardless of these things, and pretend to judge of the Scripture by preconceived expectations, the analogy of nature shews beforehand, not only that it is highly credible they may, but also probable that they will, imagine they have strong objections against it, however really unexceptionable : for so, prior to experience, they would think they had, against the circumstances, and degrees, and the whole manner of that instruction, which is afforded by the ordinary course of nature. Were the instruction which God affords to brute creatures by instincts and mere propensions, and to mankind by these together with reason, matter of probable proof, and not of certain observation, it would be rejected as incredible, in many instances of it, only upon account of the means by which this instruction is given, the seeming disproportions, the limitations, necessary conditions, and circumstances of it. For instance : would it not have been thought highly improbable, that men should have been so much more capable of discovering, even to certainty, the general laws of matter, and the magnitudes, paths, and revolutions of the heavenly bodies ; than the occasions and cures of distempers, and many other things, in which human life seems so much more nearly concerned, than in astronomy ? How capricious and irregular a way of information, would it be said, is that of *invention*, by means of which nature instructs us in matters of science, and in many things upon which the affairs of the world greatly depend ; that a man should, by this faculty, be made acquainted with a thing in an instant, when, perhaps, he is thinking of somewhat else which he has in vain been searching after, it may be, for years. So likewise the imperfections attending the only method by which nature enables and directs us to communicate our thoughts to each other, are innumerable. Language is, in its very nature, inadequate, ambiguous, liable to infinite abuse, even from negligence ; and so liable to it from design, that every man can deceive and betray by it. And to mention but one instance more, that brutes, without reason, should act, in many respects, with a sagacity



and foresight vastly greater than what men have in those respects, would be thought impossible. Yet it is certain they do act with such superior foresight : whether it be their own, indeed, is another question. From these things it is highly credible beforehand, that upon supposition God should afford men some additional instruction by revelation, it would be with circumstances, in manners, degrees, and respects, which we should be apt to fancy we had great objections against the credibility of. Nor are the objections against the Scripture, nor against Christianity in general, at all more or greater than the analogy of nature would beforehand,—not perhaps give ground to expect ; for this analogy may not be sufficient, in some cases, to ground an expectation upon ;—but no more nor greater, than analogy would shew it, beforehand, to be supposable and credible, that there might seem to lie against revelation.

By applying these general observations to a particular objection, it will be more distinctly seen, how they are applicable to others of the like kind ; and indeed to almost all objections against Christianity, as distinguished from objections against its evidence. It appears from Scripture, that as it was not unusual, in the apostolic age, for persons, upon their conversion to Christianity, to be endued with miraculous gifts ; so, some of those persons exercised these gifts in a strangely irregular and disorderly manner ; and this is made an objection against their being really miraculous. Now, the foregoing observations quite remove this objection, how considerable soever it may appear at first sight. For, consider a person endued with any of these gifts, for instance that of tongues ; it is to be supposed, that he had the same power over this miraculous gift, as he would have had over it, had it been the effect of habit, of study, and use, as it ordinarily is ; or the same power over it, as he had over any other natural endowment. Consequently, he would use it in the same manner he did any other ; either regularly and upon proper occasions only, or irregularly and upon improper ones ; according to his sense of decency, and his character of prudence. Where, then, is the objection ? Why, if this miraculous power was indeed given to the world, to propagate Christianity and attest the truth of it, we might, it seems, have expected that other sort of persons should have been chosen to be invested with it ; or that these should at the same time have been endued with prudence ; or that they should have been continually restrained and directed in the exercise of it ; *i. e.* that God should have miraculously interposed, if at all, in a different manner or higher degree.



But, from the observations made above, it is undeniably evident, that we are not judges in what degrees and manners it were to have been expected he should miraculously interpose; upon supposition of his doing it in some degree and manner. Nor, in the natural course of Providence, are superior gifts of memory, eloquence, knowledge, and other talents of great influence, conferred only on persons of prudence and decency, or such as are disposed to make the properest use of them. Nor is instruction and admonition naturally afforded us for the conduct of life, particularly in our education, commonly given in a manner the most suited to recommend it; but often with circumstances apt to prejudice us against such instruction.

One might go on to add, that there is a great resemblance between the light of nature and of revelation, in several other respects. Practical Christianity, or that faith and behaviour which renders a man a Christian, is a plain and obvious thing; like the common rules of conduct, with respect to our ordinary temporal affairs. The more distinct and particular knowledge of those things, the study of which the apostle calls *going on unto perfection*, (Heb. vi. 1.) and of the prophetic parts of revelation, like many parts of natural and even civil knowledge, may require very exact thought and careful consideration. The hinderances too, of natural and of supernatural light and knowledge, have been of the same kind. And as it is owned the whole scheme of Scripture is not yet understood, so, if it ever comes to be understood, before the *restitution of all things*, (Acts iii. 21.) and without miraculous interpositions, it must be in the same way as natural knowledge is come at; by the continuance and progress of learning and of liberty, and by particular persons attending to, comparing, and pursuing, intimations scattered up and down it, which are overlooked and disregarded by the generality of the world. For this is the way in which all improvements are made; by thoughtful men tracing on obscure hints, as it were, dropped us by nature accidentally, or which seem to come into our minds by chance. Nor is it at all incredible, that a book, which has been so long in the possession of mankind, should contain many truths as yet undiscovered. For, all the same phenomena, and the same faculties of investigation, from which such great discoveries in natural knowledge have been made in the present and last age, were equally in the possession of mankind several thousand years before. And possibly it might be intended, that events, as they come to pass, should open and ascertain the meaning of several parts of Scripture.

It may be objected, that this analogy fails in a material respect; for that natural knowledge is of little or no consequence. But I have been speaking of the general instruction, which nature does or does not afford us. And besides, some parts of natural knowledge, in the more common restrained sense of the words, are of the greatest consequence to the ease and convenience of life. But suppose the analogy did, as it does not, fail in this respect, yet it might be abundantly supplied from the whole constitution and course of nature; which shows, that God does not dispense his gifts according to our notions of the advantage and consequence they would be of to us. And this in general, with his method of dispensing knowledge in particular, would together make out an analogy full to the point before us.

But it may be objected still farther, and more generally; “The Scripture represents the world as in a state of ruin, and Christianity as an expedient to recover it, to help in these respects where nature fails; in particular, to supply the deficiencies of natural light. Is it credible, then, that so many ages should have been let pass, before a matter of such a sort, of so great and so general importance, was made known to mankind; and then that it should be made known to so small a part of them? Is it conceivable, that this supply should be so very deficient, should have the like obscurity and doubtfulness, be liable to the like perversions, in short, lie open to all the like objections, as the light of nature itself?” (Chap. vi.) Without determining how far this in fact is so, I answer, it is by no means incredible that it might be so, if the light of nature and of revelation be from the same hand. Men are naturally liable to diseases; for which God, in his good providence, has provided natural remedies. (See chap. v.) But remedies existing in nature have been unknown to mankind for many ages; are known but to few now; probably many valuable ones are not known yet. Great has been, and is, the obscurity and difficulty, in the nature and application of them. Circumstances seem often to make them very improper, where they are absolutely necessary. It is after long labour and study, and many unsuccessful endeavours, that they are brought to be as useful as they are; after high contempt and absolute rejection of the most useful we have; and after disputes and doubts, which have seemed to be endless. The best remedies, too, when unskilfully, much more if dishonestly, applied, may produce new diseases; and, with the rightest application, the success of them is often doubtful. In many cases, they are not at all effectual;

where they are, it is often very slowly ; and the application of them, and the necessary regimen accompanying it, is, not uncommonly, so disagreeable, that some will not submit to them; and satisfy themselves with the excuse, that if they would, it is not certain whether it would be successful. And many persons who labour under diseases, for which there are known natural remedies, are not so happy as to be always, if ever, in the way of them. In a word, the remedies which nature has provided for diseases, are neither certain, perfect, nor universal. And indeed the same principles of arguing, which would lead us to conclude that they must be so, would lead us likewise to conclude, that there could be no occasion for them ; *i. e.* that there could be no diseases at all. And, therefore, our experience that there are diseases, shews, that it is credible beforehand, upon supposition nature has provided remedies for them, that these remedies may be, as by experience we find they are, not certain, nor perfect, nor universal ; because it shows that the principles upon which we should expect the contrary, are fallacious.

And now, what is the just consequence from all these things? Not that reason is no judge of what is offered to us as being of divine revelation. For this would be to infer, that we are unable to judge of any thing, because we are unable to judge of all things. Reason can, and it ought to judge, not only of the meaning, but also of the morality and the evidence, of revelation. *First*, it is the province of reason to judge of the morality of the Scripture ; *i. e.* not whether it contains things different from what we should have expected from a wise, just, and good Being ; for objections from hence have been now obviated ; but whether it contains things plainly contradictory to wisdom, justice, or goodness ; to what the light of nature teaches us of God. And I know nothing of this sort objected against Scripture, excepting such objections as are formed upon suppositions, which would equally conclude, that the constitution of nature is contradictory to wisdom, justice, or goodness ; which most certainly it is not. Indeed, there are some particular precepts in Scripture, given to particular persons, requiring actions, which would be immoral and vicious, were it not for such precepts. But it is easy to see, that all these are of such a kind, as that the precept changes the whole nature of the case and of the action ; and both constitutes and shows that not to be unjust or immoral, which, prior to the precept, must have appeared and really have been so ; which may well be, since none of these precepts are contrary to immutable morality. If it were commanded, to cultivate the principles, and act from the

spirit, of treachery, ingratitude, cruelty ; the command would not alter the nature of the case, or of the action, in any of these instances. But it is quite otherwise in precepts, which require only the doing an external action ; for instance, taking away the property or life of any. For men have no right to either life or property, but what arises solely from the grant of God : When this grant is revoked, they cease to have any right at all in either ; and when this revocation is made known, as surely it is possible it may be, it must cease to be unjust to deprive them of either. And though a course of external acts, which without command would be immoral, must make an immoral habit, yet a few detached commands have no such natural tendency. I thought proper to say thus much of the few Scripture precepts, which require, not vicious actions, but actions which would have been vicious had it not been for such precepts ; because they are sometimes weakly urged as immoral, and great weight is laid upon objections drawn from them. But to me there seems no difficulty at all in these precepts, but what arises from their being offences ; *i. e.* from their being liable to be perverted, as indeed they are, by wicked designing men, to serve the most horrid purposes, and, perhaps, to mislead the weak and enthusiastic. And objections from this head are not objections against revelation, but against the whole notion of religion, as a trial ; and against the general constitution of nature. *Secondly*, reason is able to judge, and must, of the evidence of revelation, and of the objections urged against that evidence ; which shall be the subject of a following chapter. (Chap. vii.).

But the consequence of the foregoing observations is, that the question upon which the truth of Christianity depends, is scarce at all, what objections there are against its scheme, since there are none against the morality of it ; but *what objections there are against its evidence ; or, what proof there remains of it, after due allowances made for the objections against that proof ;* because it has been shewn, that the *objections against Christianity, as distinguished from objections against its evidence, are frivolous.* For surely very little weight, if any at all, is to be laid upon a way of arguing and objecting, which, when applied to the general constitution of nature, experience shews not to be conclusive : and such, I think, is the whole way of objecting treated of throughout this Chapter. It is resolvable into principles, and goes upon suppositions, which mislead us to think, that the Author of nature would not act, as we experience he does ; or would act, in such and such cases, as we experience he does not, in like cases. But the unreasonableness of

this way of objecting will appear yet more evidently from hence, that the chief things thus objected against, are justified, as shall be farther shewn, (Chap. iv. latter part, and v. vi.) by distinct, particular, and full analogies, in the constitution and course of nature.

But it is to be remembered, that as frivolous as objections of the foregoing sort against revelation are, yet, when a supposed revelation is more consistent with itself, and has a more general and uniform tendency to promote virtue, than, all circumstances considered, could have been expected from enthusiasm and political views; this is a presumptive proof of its not proceeding from them, and so of its truth; because we are competent judges, what might have been expected from enthusiasm and political views.

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## CHAP. IV.

### OF CHRISTIANITY, CONSIDERED AS A SCHEME OR CONSTITUTION, IMPERFECTLY COMPREHENDED.

It hath been now shewn in the foregoing chapter, that the analogy of nature renders it highly credible beforehand, that, supposing a revelation to be made, it must contain many things very different from what we should have expected, and such as appear open to great objections; and that this observation, in good measure, takes off the force of those objections, or rather precludes them. But it may be alleged, that this is a very partial answer to such objections, or a very unsatisfactory way of obviating them: because it doth not shew at all, that the things objected against can be wise, just, and good; much less, that it is credible they are so. It will therefore be proper to shew this distinctly, by applying to these objections against the wisdom, justice, and goodness of Christianity, the answer above, (Part i. Chap. vii.) to which this all along refers, given to the like objections against the constitution of nature; before we consider the particular analogies in the latter, to the particular things objected against in the former. Now, that which affords a sufficient answer to objections against the wisdom, justice, and goodness of the constitution of nature, is its being a constitution, a system, or scheme, imperfectly comprehended; a scheme, in which means are made use of to accomplish ends,

and which is carried on by general laws. For, from these things it has been proved, not only to be possible, but also to be credible, that those things which are objected against, may be consistent with wisdom, justice, and goodness; nay, may be instances of them: and even that the constitution and government of nature may be perfect in the highest possible degree. If Christianity, then, be a scheme, and of the like kind, it is evident, the like objections against it must admit of the like answer. And,

I. Christianity is a scheme, quite beyond our comprehension. The moral government of God is exercised, by gradually conducting things so in the course of his providence, that every one, at length, and upon the whole, shall receive according to his deserts; and neither fraud nor violence, but truth and right, shall finally prevail. Christianity is a particular scheme under this general plan of providence, and a part of it, conducive to its completion, with regard to mankind: consisting itself also of various parts, and a mysterious economy, which has been carrying on from the time the world came into its present wretched state, and is still carrying on, for its recovery, by a divine person, the Messiah; "who is to gather together in one, the children of God that are scattered abroad," (John xi. 52,) and establish "an everlasting kingdom, wherein dwelleth righteousness," (2 Peter iii. 13.) And in order to it, after various manifestations of things, relating to this great and general scheme of Providence, through a succession of many ages; "for the Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets, testified beforehand his sufferings, and the glory that should follow: unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto us by them that have preached the gospel; which things the angels desire to look into," (1 Peter i. 11, 12); after various dispensations, looking forward and preparatory to this final salvation, "in the fulness of time," when infinite wisdom thought fit, he, "being in the form of God, made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross; wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in the earth, and things under the earth, and that every tongue should confess, that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father," (Phil. ii.) Parts likewise of

this economy, are the miraculous mission of the Holy Ghost, and his ordinary assistances given to good men; the invisible government which Christ at present exercises over his church; that which he himself refers to in these words, (John xiv. 2,) "In my Father's house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you;" and his future return to "judge the world in righteousness," and completely re-establish the kingdom of God. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father; (John v. 22, 23.) All power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; (Matth. xxviii. 18.) And he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet. Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all;" (1 Cor. xv.) Now little, surely, need be said to shew, that this system, or scheme of things, is but imperfectly comprehended by us. The Scripture expressly asserts it to be so. And, indeed, one cannot read a passage relating to this "great mystery of godliness," (1 Tim. iii. 16,) but what immediately runs up into something which shews us our ignorance in it; as every thing in nature shews us our ignorance in the constitution of nature. And whoever will seriously consider that part of the Christian scheme which is revealed in Scripture, will find so much more unrevealed, as will convince him, that to all the purposes of judging and objecting, we know as little of it as of the constitution of nature. Our ignorance, therefore, is as much an answer to our objections against the perfection of one, as against the perfection of the other. (Page 319, &c.)

II. It is obvious, too, that in the Christian dispensation, as much as in the natural scheme of things, means are made use of to accomplish ends. And the observation of this furnishes us with the same answer to objections against the perfection of Christianity, as to objections of the like kind against the constitution of nature. It shews the credibility, that the things objected against, how *foolish* soever they appear to men, (1 Cor. i.) may be the very best means of accomplishing the very best ends. And their appearing *foolishness* is no presumption against this, in a scheme so greatly beyond our comprehension, (Page 322.)

III. The credibility, that the Christian dispensation may



have been, all along, carried on by general laws, (pages 323, 324,) no less than the course of nature, may require to be more distinctly made out. Consider, then, upon what ground it is we say, that the whole common course of nature is carried on according to general fore-ordained laws. We know, indeed, several of the general laws of matter; and a great part of the natural behaviour of living agents is reducible to general laws. But we know, in a manner, nothing, by what laws, storms and tempests, earthquakes, famine, pestilence, become the instruments of destruction to mankind. And the laws, by which persons born into the world at such a time and place, are of such capacities, genius, tempers; the laws, by which thoughts come into our mind, in a multitude of cases; and by which innumerable things happen, of the greatest influence upon the affairs and state of the world: these laws are so wholly unknown to us, that we call the events, which come to pass by them, accidental; though all reasonable men know certainly, that there cannot, in reality, be any such thing as chance; and conclude, that the things which have this appearance are the result of general laws, and may be reduced into them. It is then but an exceeding little way, and in but a very few respects, that we can trace up the natural course of things before us, to general laws. And it is only from analogy that we conclude the whole of it to be capable of being reduced into them; only from our seeing, that part is so. It is from our finding, that the course of nature, in some respects and so far, goes on by general laws, that we conclude this of the rest. And if that be a just ground for such a conclusion, it is a just ground also, if not to conclude, yet to apprehend, to render it supposable and credible, which is sufficient for answering objections, that God's miraculous interpositions may have been, all along, in like manner, by *general* laws of wisdom. Thus, that miraculous powers should be exerted at such times, upon such occasions, in such degrees and manners, and with regard to such persons, rather than others; that the affairs of the world, being permitted to go on in their natural course so far, should, just at such a point, have a new direction given them by miraculous interpositions; that these interpositions should be exactly in such degrees and respects only; all this may have been by general laws. These laws are unknown, indeed, to us; but no more unknown, than the laws from whence it is, that some die as soon as they are born, and others live to extreme old age; that one man is so superior to another in understanding; with innumerable more things, which, as was before observed, we

cannot reduce to any laws, or rules, at all, though it is taken for granted, they are as much reducible to general ones as gravitation. Now, if the revealed dispensations of Providence, and miraculous interpositions, be by general laws, as well as God's ordinary government in the course of nature, made known by reason and experience; there is no more reason to expect, that every exigence, as it arises, should be provided for by these general laws of miraculous interpositions, than that every exigence in nature should, by the general laws of nature; yet there might be wise and good reasons, that miraculous interpositions should be by general laws; and that these laws should not be broken in upon, or deviated from, by other miracles.

Upon the whole, then, the appearance of deficiencies and irregularities in nature, is owing to its being a scheme but in part made known, and of such a certain particular kind in other respects. Now we see no more reason, why the frame and course of nature should be such a scheme, than why Christianity should. And that the former is such a scheme, renders it credible, that the latter, upon supposition of its truth, may be so too. And as it is manifest, that Christianity is a scheme revealed but in part, and a scheme in which means are made use of to accomplish ends, like to that of nature; so the credibility, that it may have been all along carried on by general laws, no less than the course of nature, has been distinctly proved. And from all this it is beforehand credible, that there might, I think probable that there would, be the like appearance of deficiencies and irregularities in Christianity as in nature, *i. e.* that Christianity would be liable to the like objections, as the frame of nature. And these objections are answered by these observations concerning Christianity; as the like objections against the frame of nature, are answered by the like observations concerning the frame of nature.

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The objections against Christianity, considered as a matter of fact, (page 351) having, in general, been obviated in the preceding chapter; and the same, considered as made against the wisdom and goodness of it, having been obviated in this; the next thing, according to the method proposed, is to shew, that the principal objections, in particular, against Christianity, may be answered by particular and full analogies in nature. And as one of them is made against the whole scheme of it together, as just now described, I choose to consider it here,

rather than in a distinct Chapter by itself. The thing objected against this scheme of the gospel is, "That it seems to suppose God was reduced to the necessity of a long series of intricate means, in order to accomplish his ends, the recovery and salvation of the world; in like sort as men, for want of understanding, or power, not being able to come at their ends directly, are forced to go round about ways, and make use of many perplexed contrivances to arrive at them." Now every thing which we see shews the folly of this, considered as an objection against the truth of Christianity. For, according to our manner of conception, God makes use of variety of means, what we often think tedious ones, in the natural course of providence, for the accomplishment of all his ends. Indeed, it is certain, there is somewhat in this matter quite beyond our comprehension; but the mystery is as great in nature as in Christianity. We know what we ourselves aim at, as final ends; and what courses we take, merely as means conducing to those ends. But we are greatly ignorant, how far things are considered by the Author of nature, under the single notion of means and ends; so as that it may be said, this is merely an end, and that merely means, in his regard. And whether there be not some peculiar absurdity in our very manner of conception concerning this matter, somewhat contradictory, arising from our extremely imperfect views of things, it is impossible to say. However, thus much is manifest, that the whole natural world and government of it is a scheme, or system; not a fixed, but a progressive one; a scheme, in which the operation of various means takes up a great length of time, before the ends they tend to can be attained. The change of seasons, the ripening of the fruits of the earth, the very history of a flower, is an instance of this; and so is human life. Thus, vegetable bodies, and those of animals, though possibly formed at once, yet grow up by degrees to a mature state. And thus rational agents, who animate these latter bodies, are naturally directed to form, each his own manners and character, by the gradual gaining of knowledge and experience, and by a long course of action. Our existence is not only successive, as it must be of necessity, but one state of our life and being is appointed by God to be a preparation for another; and that, to be the means of attaining to another succeeding one: infancy to childhood; childhood to youth; youth to mature age. Men are impatient, and for precipitating things; but the Author of nature appears deliberate throughout his operations; accomplishing his natural ends by slow successive steps. And there

is a plan of things beforehand laid out, which, from the nature of it, requires various systems of means, as well as length of time, in order to the carrying on its several parts into execution. Thus, in the daily course of natural providence, God operates in the very same manner as in the dispensation of Christianity: making one thing subservient to another; this, to somewhat farther; and so on, through a progressive series of means, which extend, both backward and forward, beyond our utmost view. Of this manner of operation, every thing we see in the course of nature is as much an instance as any part of the Christian dispensation.

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## CHAP. V.

### OF THE PARTICULAR SYSTEM OF CHRISTIANITY; THE APPOINTMENT OF A MEDIATOR, AND THE REDEMPTION OF THE WORLD BY HIM.

THERE is not, I think, any thing relating to Christianity, which has been more objected against, than the mediation of Christ, in some or other of its parts. Yet, upon thorough consideration, there seems nothing less justly liable to it. For,

I. The whole analogy of nature removes all imagined presumption against the general notion of “a Mediator between God and man.” (1. Tim. ii. 5.) For we find, all living creatures are brought into the world, and their life in infancy is preserved, by the instrumentality of others; and every satisfaction of it, some way or other, is bestowed by the like means. So that the visible government, which God exercises over the world, is by the instrumentality and mediation of others. And how far his invisible government be, or be not so, it is impossible to determine at all by reason. And the supposition, that part of it is so, appears, to say the least, altogether as credible as the contrary. There is then no sort of objection, from the light of nature, against the general notion of a mediator between God and man, considered as a doctrine of Christianity, or as an appointment in this dispensation; since we find, by experience, that God does appoint mediators to be the instruments of good and evil to us, the instruments of his justice and his mercy. And the objection here referred to is urged, not against mediation in that high, eminent, and peculiar sense, in which Christ

is our mediator ; but absolutely against the whole notion itself of a mediator at all.

II. As we must suppose that the world is under the proper moral government of God, or in a state of religion, before we can enter into consideration of the revealed doctrine concerning the redemption of it by Christ ; so that supposition is here to be distinctly taken notice of. Now, the divine moral government which religion teaches us, implies, that the consequence of vice shall be misery, in some future state, by the righteous judgment of God. That such consequent punishment shall take effect by his appointment, is necessarily implied. But, as it is not in any sort to be supposed, that we are made acquainted with all the ends or reasons for which it is fit future punishments should be inflicted, or why God has appointed such and such consequent misery should follow vice ; and as we are altogether in the dark, how or in what manner it shall follow, by what immediate occasions, or by the instrumentality of what means ; there is no absurdity in supposing, it may follow in a way analogous to that in which many miseries follow such and such courses of action at present ; poverty, sickness, infamy, untimely death by diseases, death from the hands of civil justice. There is no absurdity in supposing future punishment may follow wickedness of course, as we speak, or in the way of natural consequence, from God's original constitution of the world ; from the nature he has given us, and from the condition in which he places us : or, in a like manner, as a person rashly trifling upon a precipice, in the way of natural consequence, falls down ; in the way of natural consequence, breaks his limbs, suppose ; in the way of natural consequence of this, without help, perishes.

Some good men may, perhaps, be offended, with hearing it spoken of as a supposable thing, that the future punishments of wickedness may be in the way of natural consequence ; as if this were taking the execution of justice out of the hands of God, and giving it to nature. But they should remember, that when things come to pass according to the course of nature, this does not hinder them from being his doing, who is the God of nature ; and that the Scripture ascribes those punishments to divine justice, which are known to be natural, and which must be called so, when distinguished from such as are miraculous. But, after all, this supposition, or rather this way of speaking, is here made use of only by way of illustration of the subject before us. For, since it must be admitted, that the future punishment of wickedness is not a matter of arbitrary appoint-

ment, but of reason, equity, and justice ; it comes, for ought I see, to the same thing, whether it is supposed to be inflicted in a way analogous to that in which the temporal punishments of vice and folly are inflicted, or in any other way. And though there were a difference, it is allowable in the present case to make this supposition, plainly not an incredible one, that future punishment may follow wickedness in the way of natural consequence, or according to some general laws of government already established in the universe.

III. Upon this supposition, or even without it, we may observe somewhat, much to the present purpose, in the constitution of nature, or appointments of Providence : the provision which is made, that all the bad natural consequences of men's actions should not always actually follow ; or, that such bad consequences, as, according to the settled course of things, would inevitably have followed, if not prevented, should, in certain degrees, be prevented. We are apt, presumptuously, to imagine, that the world might have been so constituted, as there would not have been any such thing as misery or evil. On the contrary, we find the Author of nature permits it. But then, he has provided reliefs, and, in many cases, perfect remedies for it, after some pains and difficulties ; reliefs and remedies even for that evil, which is the fruit of our own misconduct, and which, in the course of nature, would have continued and ended in our destruction, but for such remedies. And this is an instance both of severity and of indulgence, in the constitution of nature. Thus, all the bad consequences, now mentioned, of a man's trifling upon a precipice, might be prevented. And, though all were not, yet some of them might, by proper interposition, if not rejected ; by another's coming to the rash man's relief, with his own laying hold on that relief, in such sort as the case required. Persons may do a great deal themselves towards preventing the bad consequences of their follies ; and more may be done by themselves, together with the assistance of others, their fellow-creatures ; which assistance nature requires and prompts us to. This is the general constitution of the world. Now, suppose it had been so constituted, that after such actions were done, as were foreseen naturally to draw after them misery to the doer, it should have been no more in human power to have prevented that naturally consequent misery, in any instance, than it is in all ; no one can say, whether such a more severe constitution of things might not yet have been really good. But that, on the contrary, provision is made by nature, that we may and do, to so

great degree, prevent the bad natural effects of our follies ; this may be called mercy, or compassion, in the original constitution of the world ; compassion, as distinguished from goodness in general. And, the whole known constitution and course of things affording us instances of such compassion, it would be according to the analogy of nature to hope, that, however ruinous the natural consequences of vice might be, from the general laws of God's government over the universe, yet provision might be made, possibly might have been originally made, for preventing those ruinous consequences from inevitably following ; at least from following universally, and in all cases.

Many, I am sensible, will wonder at finding this made a question, or spoken of as in any degree doubtful. The generality of mankind are so far from having that awful sense of things, which the present state of vice and misery and darkness seems to make but reasonable, that they have scarce any apprehension, or thought at all, about this matter, any way ; and some serious persons may have spoken unadvisedly concerning it. But let us observe, what we experience to be, and what, from the very constitution of nature, cannot but be, the consequences of irregular and disorderly behaviour ; even of such rashness, wilfulness, neglects, as we scarce call vicious. Now, it is natural to apprehend, that the bad consequences of irregularity will be greater, in proportion as the irregularity is so. And there is no comparison between these irregularities, and the greater instances of vice, or a dissolute profligate disregard to all religion ; if there be any thing at all in religion. For, consider what it is for creatures, moral agents, presumptuously to introduce that confusion and misery into the kingdom of God, which mankind have, in fact, introduced ; to blaspheme the sovereign Lord of all ; to contemn his authority ; to be injurious to the degree they are, to their fellow-creatures, the creatures of God. Add, that the effects of vice, in the present world, are often extreme misery, irretrievable ruin, and even death : And, upon putting all this together, it will appear, that as no one can say, in what degree fatal the unprevented consequences of vice may be, according to the general rule of divine government ; so it is by no means intuitively certain, how far these consequences could possibly, in the nature of the thing, be prevented, consistently with the eternal rule of right, or with what is, in fact, the moral constitution of nature. However, there would be large ground to hope, that the universal government was not so severely strict, but that there was room for pardon, or for having those penal consequences prevented. Yet,



IV. There seems no probability, that any thing we could do, would alone, and of itself, prevent them ; prevent their following, or being inflicted. But one would think, at least, it were impossible that the contrary should be thought certain. For we are not acquainted with the whole of the case. We are not informed of all the reasons, which render it fit that future punishments should be inflicted ; and, therefore, cannot know, whether any thing we could do would make such an alteration, as to render it fit that they should be remitted. We do not know, what the whole natural, or appointed consequences of vice are, nor in what way they would follow, if not prevented ; and, therefore, can in no sort say, whether we could do any thing, which would be sufficient to prevent them. Our ignorance being thus manifest, let us recollect the analogy of nature, or providence. For though this may be but a slight ground to raise a positive opinion upon in this matter, yet it is sufficient to answer a mere arbitrary assertion, without any kind of evidence, urged by way of objection against a doctrine, the proof of which is not reason but revelation. Consider, then,—people ruin their fortunes by extravagance ; they bring diseases upon themselves by excess ; they incur the penalties of civil laws, and surely civil government is natural : will sorrow for these follies past, and behaving well for the future, alone and of itself, prevent the natural consequences of them ? On the contrary, men's natural abilities of helping themselves are often impaired ; or, if not, yet they are forced to be beholden to the assistance of others upon several accounts, and in different ways : assistance which they would have had no occasion for, had it not been for their misconduct ; but which, in the disadvantageous condition they have reduced themselves to, is absolutely necessary to their recovery, and retrieving their affairs. Now, since this is our case, considering ourselves merely as inhabitants of this world, and as having a temporal interest here, under the natural government of God, which, however, has a great deal moral in it ; why is it not supposable, that this may be our case also in our more important capacity, as under his perfect moral government, and having a more general and future interest depending ? If we have misbehaved in this higher capacity, and rendered ourselves obnoxious to the future punishment which God has annexed to vice ; it is plainly credible, that behaving well for the time to come, may be—not useless, God forbid—but wholly insufficient, alone and of itself, to prevent that punishment ; or to put us in the condition which we should have been in, had we preserved our innocence.

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And though we ought to reason with all reverence, whenever we reason concerning the divine conduct, yet it may be added, that it is clearly contrary to all our notions of government, as well as to what is, in fact, the general constitution of nature, to suppose that doing well for the future should, in all cases, prevent all the judicial bad consequences of having done evil, or all the punishment annexed to disobedience. And we have manifestly nothing from whence to determine, in what degree, and in what cases, reformation would prevent this punishment, even supposing that it would in some. And, though the efficacy of repentance itself alone, to prevent what mankind had rendered themselves obnoxious to, and recover what they had forfeited, is now insisted upon, in opposition to Christianity; yet, by the general prevalence of propitiatory sacrifices over the heathen world, this notion, of repentance alone being sufficient to expiate guilt, appears to be contrary to the general sense of mankind.

Upon the whole, then, had the laws, the general laws of God's government, been permitted to operate, without any interposition in our behalf, the future punishment, for ought we know to the contrary, or have any reason to think, must inevitably have followed, notwithstanding any thing we could have done to prevent it. Now,

V. In this darkness, or this light of nature, call it which you please, revelation comes in; confirms every doubting fear, which could enter into the heart of man, concerning the future unprevented consequence of wickedness; supposes the world to be in a state of ruin, (a supposition which seems the very ground of the Christian dispensation, and which, if not proveable by reason, yet is in nowise contrary to it); teaches us, too, that the rules of divine government are such, as not to admit of pardon immediately and directly upon repentance, or by the sole efficacy of it; but then teaches, at the same time, what nature might justly have hoped, that the moral government of the universe was not so rigid, but that there was room for an interposition to avert the fatal consequences of vice; which, therefore, by this means, does admit of pardon. Revelation teaches us, that the unknown laws of God's more general government, no less than the particular laws by which we experience he governs us at present, are compassionate, (page 370, &c.) as well as good, in the more general notion of goodness; and that he hath mercifully provided, that there should be an interposition to prevent the destruction of human kind, whatever that destruction unprevented would have been.

“God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth,” not, to be sure, in a speculative, but in a practical sense, “that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish,” (John iii. 16.); gave his Son in the same way of goodness to the world, as he affords particular persons the friendly assistance of their fellow-creatures, when, without it, their temporal ruin would be the certain consequence of their follies: in the same way of goodness, I say, though in a transcendent and infinitely higher degree. And the Son of God “loved us, and gave himself for us,” with a love which he himself compares to that of human friendship; though, in this case, all comparisons must fall infinitely short of the thing intended to be illustrated by them. He interposed in such a manner, as was necessary and effectual to prevent that execution of justice upon sinners, which God had appointed should otherwise have been executed upon them; or in such a manner, as to prevent that punishment from actually following, which, according to the general laws of divine government, must have followed the sins of the world, had it not been for such interposition.\*

If any thing here said should appear, upon first thought, inconsistent with divine goodness, a second, I am persuaded, will entirely remove that appearance. For, were we to suppose the constitution of things to be such, as that the whole creation must have perished, had it not been for somewhat, which God had appointed should be, in order to prevent that ruin; even this supposition would not be inconsistent, in any degree, with the most absolutely perfect goodness. But still it may be

\* It cannot, I suppose, be imagined, even by the most cursory reader, that it is, in any sort, affirmed, or implied, in any thing said in this chapter, that none can have the benefit of the general redemption, but such as have the advantage of being made acquainted with it in the present life. But, it may be needful to mention, that several questions, which have been brought into the subject before us, and determined, are not in the least entered into here; questions which have been, I fear, rashly determined, and, perhaps, with equal rashness, contrary ways. For instance: Whether God could have saved the world by other means than the death of Christ, consistently with the general laws of his government? And, had not Christ come into the world, what would have been the future condition of the better sort of men; those just persons over the face of the earth, for whom Manasses in his prayer asserts, repentance was not appointed? The meaning of the first of these questions is greatly ambiguous; and neither of them can properly be answered, without going upon that infinitely absurd supposition, that we know the whole of the case. And, perhaps, the very inquiry, *what would have followed if God had not done as he has?* may have in it some very great impropriety; and ought not to be carried on any farther than is necessary to help our partial and inadequate conceptions of things.

thought, that this whole manner of treating the subject before us, supposes mankind to be naturally in a very strange state. And truly so it does. But it is not Christianity which has put us into this strange state. Whoever will consider the manifold miseries, and the extreme wickedness of the world; that the best have great wrongnesses within themselves, which they complain of, and endeavour to amend; but, that the generality grow more profligate and corrupt with age: that heathen moralists thought the present state to be a state of punishment: and, what might be added, that the earth, our habitation, has the appearance of being a ruin: whoever, I say, will consider all these, and some other obvious things, will think he has little reason to object against the Scripture account, that mankind is in a state of degradation; against this being the fact; how difficult soever he may think it to account for, or even to form a distinct conception of, the occasions and circumstances of it. But that the crime of our first parents was the occasion of our being placed in a more disadvantageous condition, is a thing throughout, and particularly analogous to what we see, in the daily course of natural Providence; as the recovery of the world, by the interposition of Christ, has been shewn to be so in general.

VI. The particular manner in which Christ interposed in the redemption of the world, or his office as Mediator, in the largest sense, *between God and man*, is thus represented to us in the Scripture: “He is the light of the world;”<sup>\*</sup> the revealer of the will of God in the most eminent sense: He is a propitiatory sacrifice;<sup>†</sup> “the Lamb of God;”<sup>‡</sup> and as he voluntarily offered himself up, he is styled our High-priest.<sup>§</sup> And, which seems of peculiar weight, he is described beforehand in the Old Testament, under the same characters of a priest, and an expiatory victim.|| And whereas it is objected, that all this is merely by way of allusion to the sacrifices of the Mosaic law, the apostle, on the contrary, affirms, that the law was a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things;<sup>¶</sup> and that the priests that offer gifts according to the law, serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God, when he was about

\* John i. and viii. 12.

† Rom. iii. 25. and v. 11. 1 Cor. v. 7. Eph. v. 2. 1 John ii. 2. Matt. xxvi. 28.

‡ John i. 29, 36, and throughout the book of Revelation.

§ Throughout the Epistle to the Hebrews.

¶ Isa. liii. Dan. ix. 24. Psalm cx. 4. ¶ Heb. x. 1.

make the tabernacle : “for see,” saith he, “that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the Mount :”\* *i. e.* the Levitical priesthood was a shadow of the priesthood of Christ, in like manner as the tabernacle made by Moses was according to that shewed him in the Mount. The priesthood of Christ and the tabernacle in the Mount, were the originals : of the former of which, the Levitical priesthood was a type ; and of the latter, the tabernacle made by Moses was a copy. The doctrine of this epistle, then, plainly is, that the legal sacrifices were allusions to the great and final atonement to be made by the blood of Christ ; and not that this was an allusion to those. Nor can any thing be more express and determinate, than the following passage : “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin. Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, he saith, sacrifice and offering,” *i. e.* of bulls and of goats, “thou wouldst not, but a body hast thou prepared me—Lo, I come to do thy will, O God.—By which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”† And to add one passage more of the like kind : “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many ; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin ;” *i. e.* without bearing sin, as he did at his first coming, by being an offering for it ; without having our *iniquities* again *laid upon him*, without being any more a sin-offering ;—“unto them that look for him, shall he appear the second time, without sin, unto salvation.”‡ Nor do the inspired writers at all confine themselves to this manner of speaking concerning the satisfaction of Christ, but declare an efficacy in what he did and suffered for us, additional to and beyond mere instruction, example and government, in great variety of expression : “That Jesus should die for that nation,” the Jews ; “and not for that nation only, but that also,” plainly by the efficacy of his death, “he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad :”§ that “he suffered for sins, the just for the unjust :”|| that “he gave his life, himself, a ransom :”¶ that “we are bought, bought with a price :”\*\* that “he redeemed us with his blood ; redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us :”†† that he is our “advocate, intercessor, and propitiation :”‡‡ that “he was made perfect (or consummate) through suffer-

\* Heb. viii. 4, 5.    † Heb. x. 4, 5, 7, 9, 10.    ‡ Heb. ix. 28.  
 § John xi. 51, 52.    || 1 Pet. iii. 18.    ¶ Matt. xx. 28.    Mark x. 45.  
 1 Tim. ii. 6.    \*\* 2 Pet. ii. 1.    Rev. xiv. 4.    1 Cor. vi. 20.    †† 1 Pet.  
 i. 19.    Rev. v. 9.    Gal. iii. 13.    ‡‡ Heb. vii. 25.    1 John ii. 1, 2.

ings ; and being thus made perfect, he became the author of salvation :”\* that “ God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, by the death of his Son on the cross ; not imputing their trespasses unto them :”† and lastly, that “ through death he destroyed him that had the power of death.”‡ Christ, then, having thus “ humbled himself, and become obedient to death, even the death of the cross, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name ; hath given all things into his hands ; hath committed all judgment unto him ; that all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father.”§ For, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing ! And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, heard I, saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.”||

These passages of Scripture seem to comprehend and express the chief parts of Christ’s office, as mediator between God and man, so far, I mean, as the nature of this his office is revealed, and it is usually treated of by divines under three heads.

*First*, He was, by way of eminence, the Prophet ; “ that Prophet that should come into the world,”¶ to declare the divine will. He published anew the law of nature, which men had corrupted ; and the very knowledge of which, to some degree, was lost among them. He taught mankind, taught us authoritatively, to “ live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” in expectation of the future judgment of God. He confirmed the truth of this moral system of nature, and gave us additional evidence of it, the evidence of testimony.\*\* He distinctly revealed the manner in which God would be worshipped, the efficacy of repentance, and the rewards and punishments of a future life. Thus he was a prophet in a sense in which no other ever was. To which is to be added, that he set us a perfect “ example, that we should follow his steps.”

*Secondly*, He has a “ kingdom, which is not of this world.” He founded a church, to be to mankind a standing memorial of religion, and invitation to it ; which he promised to be with always, even to the end. He exercises an invisible government over it, himself, and by his Spirit ; over that part of it which

\* Heb. ii. 10, and v. 9. † 2 Cor. v. 19. Rom. v. 10. Eph. ii. 16.  
‡ Heb. ii. 14. See also a remarkable passage in the book of Job, xxxiii. 24.  
§ Pl. ii. 8, 9. John iii. 35. and v. 22, 23. || Rev. v. 12, 13. ¶ John vi. 14.  
\*\* Page 334, &c.

is militant here on earth, a government of discipline, “for the perfecting of the saints, for the edifying his body ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”\* Of this church, all persons scattered over the world, who live in obedience to his laws, are members. For these he is “gone to prepare a place, and will come again to receive them unto himself, that where he is, there they may be also ; and reign with him for ever and ever ;”† and likewise “to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not his gospel.”‡

Against these parts of Christ’s office, I find no objections but what are fully obviated in the beginning of this chapter.

*Lastly*, Christ offered himself a propitiatory sacrifice, and made atonement for the sins of the world : which is mentioned last, in regard to what is objected against it. Sacrifices of expiation were commanded the Jews, and obtained amongst other nations, from tradition, whose original probably was revelation. And they were continually repeated, both occasionally, and at the returns of stated times ; and made up great part of the external religion of mankind. “But now once in the end of the world Christ appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.” (Heb. ix. 26.) And the sacrifice was in the highest degree, and with the most extensive influence, of that efficacy for obtaining pardon of sin, which the heathens may be supposed to have thought their sacrifices to have been, and which the Jewish sacrifices really were in some degree, and with regard to some persons.

How, and in what particular way, it had this efficacy, there are not wanting persons who have endeavoured to explain ; but I do not find that the Scripture has explained it. We seem to be very much in the dark concerning the manner in which the ancients understood atonement to be made, *i. e.* pardon to be obtained by sacrifices. And if the Scripture has, as surely it has, left this matter of the satisfaction of Christ mysterious, left somewhat in it unrevealed, all conjectures about it must be, if not evidently absurd, yet at least uncertain. Nor has any one reason to complain for want of farther information, unless he can shew his claim to it.

Some having endeavoured to explain the efficacy of what Christ has done and suffered for us, beyond what the Scripture has authorized ; others, probably because they could not explain it,

\* Eph. iv. 12, 13.

‡ 2 Thess. i. 8.

† John xiv. 2, 3. Rev. iii. 21, and xi. 15.



have been for taking it away, and confining his office as Redeemer of the world, to his instruction, example, and government of the church ; whereas the doctrine of the gospel appears to be, not only that he taught the efficacy of repentance, but rendered it of the efficacy which it is, by what he did and suffered for us : that he obtained for us the benefit of having our repentance accepted into eternal life : not only that he revealed to sinners, that they were in a capacity of salvation, and how they might obtain it ; but, moreover, that he put them into this capacity of salvation, by what he did and suffered for them, put us into a capacity of escaping future punishment, and obtaining future happiness. And it is our wisdom thankfully to accept the benefit, by performing the conditions upon which it is offered, on our part, without disputing how it was procured on his. For,

VII. Since we neither know by what means punishment in a future state would have followed wickedness in this ; nor in what manner it would have been inflicted, had it not been prevented ; nor all the reasons why its infliction would have been needful ; nor the particular nature of that state of happiness which Christ is gone to prepare for his disciples : and since we are ignorant how far any thing which we could do, would, alone and of itself, have been effectual to prevent that punishment to which we were obnoxious, and recover that happiness which we had forfeited ; it is most evident we are not judges, antecedently to revelation, whether a mediator was or was not necessary to obtain those ends ; to prevent that future punishment, and bring mankind to the final happiness of their nature. And for the very same reasons, upon supposition of the necessity of a mediator, we are no more judges, antecedently to revelation, of the whole nature of his office, or the several parts of which it consists ; of what was fit and requisite to be assigned him, in order to accomplish the ends of divine Providence in the appointment. And from hence it follows, that to object against the expediency or usefulness of particular things revealed to have been done or suffered by him, because we do not see how they were conducive to those ends, is highly absurd. Yet nothing is more common to be met with than this absurdity. But if it be acknowledged beforehand that we are not judges in the case, it is evident that no objection can, with any shadow of reason, be urged against any particular part of Christ's mediatorial office revealed in Scripture, till it can be shewn positively not to be requisite, or conducive, to the ends proposed to be accomplished ; or that it is in itself unreasonable.

And there is one objection made against the satisfaction of Christ, which looks to be of this positive kind: that the doctrine of his being appointed to suffer for the sins of the world, represents God as being indifferent whether he punished the innocent or the guilty. Now, from the foregoing observations, we may see the extreme slightness of all such objections; and (though it is most certain all who make them do not see the consequence) that they conclude altogether as much against God's whole original constitution of nature, and the whole daily course of divine Providence, in the government of the world, *i. e.* against the whole scheme of theism and the whole notion of religion, as against Christianity. For the world is a constitution, or system, whose parts have a mutual reference to each other; and there is a scheme of things gradually carrying on, called the course of nature, to the carrying on of which God has appointed us, in various ways, to contribute. And when, in the daily course of natural providence, it is appointed that innocent people should suffer for the faults of the guilty, this is liable to the very same objection as the instance we are now considering. The infinitely greater importance of that appointment of Christianity which is objected against, does not hinder but it may be, as it plainly is, an appointment of the very same kind with what the world affords us daily examples of. Nay, if there were any force at all in the objection, it would be stronger, in one respect, against natural providence, than against Christianity; because under the former, we are in many cases commanded, and even necessitated, whether we will or no, to suffer for the faults of others, whereas the sufferings of Christ were voluntary. The world's being under the righteous government of God, does indeed imply, that finally and upon the whole, every one shall receive according to his personal deserts; and the general doctrine of the whole Scripture is, that this shall be the completion of the divine government. But during the progress, and, for ought we know, even in order to the completion of this moral scheme, vicarious punishments may be fit, and absolutely necessary. Men, by their follies, run themselves into extreme distress; into difficulties which would be absolutely fatal to them, were it not for the interposition and assistance of others. God commands by the law of nature, that we afford them this assistance, in many cases where we cannot do it without very great pains, and labour, and sufferings to ourselves. And we see in what variety of ways one person's sufferings contribute to the relief of another; and how, or by what particular means, this come to pass, or follows, from the con-

stitution and laws of nature, which come under our notice, and being familiarized to it, men are not shocked with it. So that the reason of their insisting upon objections of the foregoing kind, against the satisfaction of Christ, is, either that they do not consider God's settled and uniform appointments as his appointments at all, or else they forget that vicarious punishment is a providential appointment of every day's experience: and then, from their being unacquainted with the more general laws of nature, or divine government over the world, and not seeing how the sufferings of Christ could contribute to the redemption of it, unless by arbitrary and tyrannical will, they conclude his sufferings could not contribute to it any other way. And yet, what has been often alleged in justification of this doctrine, even from the apparent natural tendency of this method of our redemption—its tendency to vindicate the authority of God's laws, and deter his creatures from sin; this has never yet been answered, and is, I think, plainly unanswerable: though I am far from thinking it an account of the whole of the case. But, without taking this into consideration, it abundantly appears, from the observations above made, that this objection is not an objection against Christianity, but against the whole general constitution of nature: And if it were to be considered as an objection against Christianity, or, considering it as it is, an objection against the constitution of nature, it amounts to no more in conclusion than this, that a divine appointment cannot be necessary or expedient, because the objector does not discern it to be so; though he must own that the nature of the case is such, as renders him incapable of judging whether it be so or not; or of seeing it to be necessary, though it were so.

It is, indeed, a matter of great patience to reasonable men, to find people arguing in this manner; objecting against the credibility of such particular things revealed in Scripture, that they do not see the necessity or expediency of them. For, though it is highly right, and the most pious exercise of our understanding, to inquire with due reverence into the ends and reasons of God's dispensations; yet, when those reasons are concealed, to argue from our ignorance, that such dispensations cannot be from God, is infinitely absurd. The presumption of this kind of objections seems almost lost in the folly of them. And the folly of them is yet greater when they are urged, as usually they are, against things in Christianity analogous, or like to those natural dispensations of Providence, which are matter of experience. Let reason be kept to; and, if any part of the Scripture account of the redemption of the world by Christ can

be shewn to be really contrary to it, let the Scripture, in the name of God, be given up : but let not such poor creatures as we, go on objecting against an infinite scheme, that we do not see the necessity or usefulness of all its parts, and call this reasoning ; and, which still farther heightens the absurdity in the present case, parts which we are not actively concerned in. For, it may be worth mentioning,

*Lastly*, That not only the reason of the thing, but the whole analogy of nature, should teach us, not to expect to have the like information concerning the divine conduct, as concerning our own duty. God instructs us by experience, (for it is not reason, but experience, which instructs us) what good or bad consequences will follow from our acting in such and such manners ; and by this he directs us how we are to behave ourselves. But, though we are sufficiently instructed, for the common purposes of life, yet it is but an almost infinitely small part of natural providence which we are at all let into. The case is the same with regard to revelation. The doctrine of a Mediator between God and man, against which it is objected, that the expediency of some things in it is not understood, relates only to what was done on God's part in the appointment, and on the Mediator's in the execution of it. For what is required of us, in consequence of this gracious dispensation, is another subject, in which none can complain for want of information. The constitution of the world, and God's natural government over it, is all mystery, as much as the Christian dispensation. Yet under the first, he has given men all things pertaining to life ; and under the other, all things pertaining unto godliness. And, it may be added, that there is nothing hard to be accounted for in any of the common precepts of Christianity ; though, if there were, surely a divine command is abundantly sufficient to lay us under the strongest obligations to obedience. But the fact is, that the reasons of all the Christian precepts are evident. Positive institutions are manifestly necessary to keep up and propagate religion amongst mankind. And our duty to Christ, the internal and external worship of him ; this part of the religion of the gospel manifestly arises out of what he has done and suffered, his authority and dominion, and the relation which he is revealed to stand in to us. (Page 338, &c.)

## CHAP. VI.

OF THE WANT OF UNIVERSALITY IN REVELATION : AND OF  
THE SUPPOSED DEFICIENCY IN THE PROOF OF IT.

It has been thought by some persons, that if the evidence of revelation appears doubtful, this itself turns into a positive argument against it; because it cannot be supposed, that, if it were true, it would be left to subsist upon doubtful evidence. And the objection against revelation, from its not being universal, is often insisted upon as of great weight.

Now, the weakness of these opinions may be shewn, by observing the suppositions on which they are founded, which are really such as these :—that it cannot be thought God would have bestowed any favour at all upon us, unless in the degree which, we think, he might, and which, we imagine, would be most to our particular advantage; and also, that it cannot be thought he would bestow a favour upon any, unless he bestowed the same upon all: suppositions which we find contradicted, not by a few instances in God's natural government of the world, but by the general analogy of nature together.

Persons who speak of the evidence of religion as doubtful, and of this supposed doubtfulness as a positive argument against it, should be put upon considering, what that evidence indeed is, which they act upon with regard to their temporal interests. For, it is not only extremely difficult, but, in many cases, absolutely impossible, to balance pleasure and pain, satisfaction and uneasiness, so as to be able to say on which side the overplus is. There are the like difficulties and impossibilities, in making the due allowances for a change of temper and taste, for satiety, disgusts, ill health; any of which render men incapable of enjoying, after they have obtained, what they most eagerly desired. Numberless, too, are the accidents, besides that one of untimely death, which may even probably disappoint the best concerted schemes; and strong objections are often seen to lie against them, not to be removed or answered, but which seem overbalanced by reasons on the other side; so as that the certain difficulties and dangers of the pursuit are, by every one, thought justly disregarded, upon account of the appearing greater advantages in case of success, though there be but little probability of it. *Lastly*, Every one observes

our liableness, if we be not upon our guard, to be deceived by the falsehood of men, and the false appearances of things ; and this danger must be greatly increased, if there be a strong bias within, suppose from indulged passion, to favour the deceit. Hence arises that great uncertainty and doubtfulness of proof, wherein our temporal interest really consists ; what are the most probable means of attaining it ; and whether those means will eventually be successful. And numberless instances there are, in the daily course of life, in which all men think it reasonable to engage in pursuits, though the probability is greatly against succeeding ; and to make such provision for themselves, as it is supposable they may have occasion for, though the plain acknowledged probability is, that they never shall. Then those who think the objection against revelation from its light not being universal, to be of weight, should observe, that the Author of nature, in numberless instances, bestows that upon some, which he does not upon others who seem equally to stand in need of it. Indeed, he appears to bestow all his gifts, with the most promiscuous variety, among creatures of the same species : health and strength, capacities of prudence and of knowledge, means of improvement, riches, and all external advantages. And as there are not any two men found of exactly like shape and features, so, it is probable, there are not any two of an exactly like constitution, temper, and situation, with regard to the goods and evils of life. Yet, notwithstanding these uncertainties and varieties, God does exercise a natural government over the world ; and there is such a thing as a prudent and imprudent institution of life, with regard to our health and our affairs, under that his natural government.

As neither the Jewish nor Christian revelation have been universal, and as they have been afforded to a greater or less part of the world, at different times, so, likewise, at different times, both revelations have had different degrees of evidence. The Jews who lived during the succession of prophets, that is, from Moses till after the captivity, had higher evidence of the truth of their religion, than those had who lived in the interval between the last-mentioned period and the coming of Christ. And the first Christians had higher evidence of the miracles wrought in attestation of Christianity than what we have now. They had also a strong presumptive proof of the truth of it, perhaps of much greater force, in way of argument, than many think, of which we have very little remaining ; I mean, the presumptive proof of its truth, from the influence which it had upon the lives of the generality of its professors.

I we, or future ages, may possibly have a proof of it, which  
 could not have, from the conformity between the prophe-  
 cies, and the state of the world, and of Christianity.  
 I farther: If we were to suppose the evidence, which some  
 of religion, to amount to little more than seeing that it  
 be true, but that they remain in great doubts and uncer-  
 tainties about both its evidence and its nature, and great per-  
 plexities concerning the rule of life; others to have a full con-  
 viction of the truth of religion, with a distinct knowledge of their  
 duty; and others severally to have all the intermediate degrees  
 of religious light and evidence, which lie between these two—  
 we put the case, that for the present it was intended revela-  
 tion should be no more than a small light, in the midst of a  
 world greatly overspread, notwithstanding it, with ignorance  
 and darkness; that certain glimmerings of this light should ex-  
 tend, and be directed, to remote distances, in such a manner as  
 that those who really partook of it should not discern from  
 whence it originally came; that some, in a nearer situation to  
 it should have its light obscured, and, in different ways and  
 degrees, intercepted; and that others should be placed within  
 a clearer influence, and be much more enlivened, cheered, and  
 actuated by it; but yet, that even to these it should be no more  
 than “a light shining in a dark place:” all this would be per-  
 fectly uniform and of a piece with the conduct of Providence,  
 in the distribution of its other blessings. If the fact of the case  
 really were, that some have received no light at all from the  
 scripture; as many ages and countries in the heathen world:  
 that others, though they have, by means of it, had essential or  
 moral religion enforced upon their consciences, yet have never  
 had the genuine Scripture revelation, with its real evidence,  
 proposed to their consideration; and the ancient Persians and  
 modern Mahometans may possibly be instances of people in a  
 situation somewhat like to this: that others, though they have  
 had the Scripture laid before them as of divine revelation, yet  
 have had it with the system and evidence of Christianity so in-  
 terpolated, the system so corrupted, the evidence so blended  
 with false miracles, as to leave the mind in the utmost doubt-  
 ness and uncertainty about the whole; which may be the  
 case of some thoughtful men in most of those nations who  
 call themselves Christian: and, *lastly*, that others have had  
 Christianity offered to them in its genuine simplicity, and with  
 proper evidence, as persons in countries and churches of civil  
 liberty of Christian liberty; but, however, that even these persons  
 are left in great ignorance in many respects, and have by no



#### REVELATION NOT UNIVERSAL :

light afforded them enough to satisfy their curiosity, but to regulate their life, to teach them their duty, and enable them in the careful discharge of it: I say, if we were to see this somewhat of a general true account of the divine moral and religious light and evidence, which were indeed to be afforded mankind, and of what has actually been their situation, in their moral and religious capacity, it would be nothing in all this ignorance, doubtfulness, and uncertainty, in all these varieties and supposed disadvantages of comparison of others, respecting religion, but may be justified by manifest analogies in the natural dispensations of providence at present, and considering ourselves merely in our present capacity.

Is there any thing shocking in all this, or which would bear hard upon the moral administration in nature, if we really keep in mind, that every one shall be dealt with; instead of forgetting this, or explaining it away after it is acknowledged in words. All shadow of injustice, indeed all harsh appearances, in this various economy of providence, would be lost, if we would keep in mind, that merciful allowance shall be made, and no more be required of him, than what might have been equitably expected of him, in the circumstances in which he was placed, and not what might have been expected, had he been placed in other circumstances:

res of moral natures or capacities, for a considerable part of that duration in which they are living agents, are not at all objects of morality and religion ; but grow up to be so, and grow up to be so more and more, gradually from childhood to mature age.

What, in particular, is the account or reason of these things, must be greatly in the dark, were it only that we know so very little even of our own case. Our present state may possibly be the consequence of somewhat past, which we are wholly ignorant of ; as it has a reference to somewhat to come, of which

we know scarce any more than is necessary for practice. A system, or constitution, in its notion, implies variety ; and so complicated an one as this world, very great variety. So that the revelation universal, yet from men's different capacities of understanding, from the different lengths of their lives, their different educations and other external circumstances, and from their difference of temper and bodily constitution ; their religious situations would be widely different, and the disadvantage some in comparison of others, perhaps, altogether as much as at present. And the true account, whatever it be, why mankind, or such a part of mankind, are placed in this condition of ignorance, must be supposed also the true account of their farther ignorance, in not knowing the reasons why, or whence it is, that they are placed in this condition. But the following sceptical reflections may deserve the serious consideration of those persons, who think the circumstances of mankind, or their condition, in the forementioned respects, a ground of complaint.

*First*, The evidence of religion not appearing obvious, may constitute one particular part of some men's trial in the religious sense ; as it gives scope for a virtuous exercise, or vicious neglect, of their understanding, in examining or not examining to that evidence. There seems no possible reason to be given, why we may not be in a state of moral probation, with regard to the exercise of our understanding upon the subject of religion, as we are with regard to our behaviour in common affairs. The former is as much a thing within our power and choice as the latter. And I suppose it is to be laid down for certain, that at the same character, the same inward principle, which, when a man is convinced of the truth of religion, renders him obedient to the precepts of it, would, were he not thus convinced, set him about an examination of it, upon its system and evidence being offered to his thoughts ; and that in the latter state his examination would be with an impartiality, seriousness and solicitude, proportionable to what his obedience

is in the former. And as inattention, negligence, want of all serious concern, about a matter of such a nature and such importance, when offered to men's consideration, is, before a distinct conviction of its truth, as real immoral depravity and dissoluteness, as neglect of religious practice after such conviction; so, active solicitude about it, and fair impartial consideration of its evidence before such conviction, is as really an exercise of a morally right temper, as is religious practice after. Thus, that religion is not intuitively true, but a matter of deduction and inference; that a conviction of its truth is not forced upon every one, but left to be, by some, collected with heedful attention to premises; this as much constitutes religious probation, as much affords sphere, scope, opportunity, for right and wrong behaviour, as any thing whatever does. And their manner of treating this subject, when laid before them, shews what is in their heart, and is an exertion of it.

*Secondly,* It appears to be a thing as evident, though it is not so much attended to, that if, upon consideration of religion, the evidence of it should seem to any persons doubtful, in the highest supposable degree, even this doubtful evidence will, however, put them into a *general state of probation*, in the moral and religious sense. For, suppose a man to be really in doubt, whether such a person had not done him the greatest favour; or, whether his whole temporal interest did not depend upon that person; no one, who had any sense of gratitude and of prudence, could possibly consider himself in the same situation, with regard to such person, as if he had no such doubt. In truth, it is as just to say, that certainty and doubt are the same, as to say, the situations now mentioned would leave a man as entirely at liberty, in point of gratitude or prudence, as he would be, were he certain he had received no favour from such person, or that he no way depended upon him. And thus, though the evidence of religion which is afforded to some men, should be little more than that they are given to see the system of Christianity, or religion in general, to be supposable and credible, this ought in all reason to beget a serious practical apprehension that it may be true. And even this will afford matter of exercise, for religious suspense and deliberation, for moral resolution and self-government; because the apprehension that religion may be true, does as really lay men under obligations, as a full conviction that it is true. It gives occasion and motives to consider farther the important subject; to preserve attentively upon their minds a general implicit sense that they may be under divine moral government, an awful solicitude about

involved, which some complain of, is no more a just ground of complaint, than the external circumstances of temptation, which others are placed in ; or than difficulties in the practice of it, after a full conviction of its truth. Temptations render our state a more improving state of discipline (Part i. chap. v.) than it would be otherwise ; as they give occasion for a more attentive exercise of the virtuous principle, which confirms and strengthens it more than an easier or less attentive exercise of it could. Now, speculative difficulties are, in this respect, of the very same nature with these external temptations. For the evidence of religion not appearing obvious, is, to some persons, a temptation to reject it, without any consideration at all ; and therefore requires such an attentive exercise of the virtuous principle, seriously to consider that evidence, as there would be no occasion for, but for such temptation. And the supposed doubtfulness of its evidence, after it has been in some sort considered, affords opportunity to an unfair mind, of explaining away, and deceitfully hiding from itself, that evidence which it might see ; and also for men's encouraging themselves in vice, from hopes of impunity, though they do clearly see thus much at least, that these hopes are uncertain : in like manner, as the common temptation to many instances of folly, which end in moral infamy and ruin, is the ground for hope of not being detected, and of escaping with impunity ; i. e. the doubtfulness of the proof beforehand, that such foolish behaviour will thus end in infamy and ruin. On the contrary, supposed doubtfulness in the evidence of religion calls for a more careful and attentive exercise of the virtuous principle, in fairly yielding ourselves up to the proper influence of any real evidence, though doubtful ; and in practising conscientiously all virtue, though under some uncertainty, whether the government in the universe may not possibly be such, as that vice may escape with impunity. And, in general, temptation, meaning by this word the lesser allurements to wrong, and difficulties in the discharge of our duty, as well as the greater ones ; temptation, say, as such, and of every kind and degree, as it calls forth some virtuous efforts, additional to what would otherwise have been wanting, cannot but be an additional discipline and improvement of virtue, as well as probation of it, in the other senses of that word. (Part i. chap. iv. page 306.) So that the very same account is to be given, why the evidence of religion should be left in such a manner, as to require, in some, an attentive, solicitous, perhaps painful, exercise of their understanding about it ; as why others should be placed in such

circumstances, as that the practice of its common duties, after a full conviction of the truth of it, should require attention, solicitude, and pains; or, why appearing doubtfulness should be permitted to afford matter of temptation to some; as why external difficulties and allurements should be permitted to afford matter of temptation to others. The same account also is to be given, why some should be exercised with temptations of both these kinds, as why others should be exercised with the latter in such very high degrees, as some have been, particularly as the primitive Christians were.

Nor does there appear any absurdity in supposing, that the speculative difficulties in which the evidence of religion is involved, may make even the principal part of some person's trial. For, as the chief temptations of the generality of the world, are, the ordinary motives to injustice or unrestrained pleasure; or to live in the neglect of religion from that frame of mind, which renders many persons almost without feeling as to any thing distant, or which is not the object of their senses; so there are other persons without this shallowness of temper, persons of a deeper sense as to what is invisible and future, who not only see, but have a general practical feeling, that what is to come will be present, and that things are not less real for their not being the objects of sense; and who, from their natural constitution of body and of temper, and from their external condition, may have small temptations to behave ill, small difficulty in behaving well, in the common course of life. Now, when these latter persons have a distinct, full conviction of the truth of religion, without any possible doubts or difficulties, the practice of it is to them unavoidable, unless they will do a constant violence to their own minds; and religion is scarce any more a discipline to them, than it is to creatures in a state of perfection. Yet these persons may possibly stand in need of moral discipline and exercise in a higher degree than they would have by such an easy practice of religion. Or it may be requisite, for reasons unknown to us, that they should give some further manifestation (page 306) what is their moral character, to the creation of God, than such a practice of it would be. Thus, in the great variety of religious situations in which men are placed, what constitutes, what chiefly and peculiarly constitutes the probation, in all senses, of some persons, may be the difficulties in which the evidence of religion is involved; and their principal and distinguished trial may be, how they will behave under and with respect to these difficulties. Circumstances in men's situation in their temporal capacity;

analogous in good measure to this, respecting religion, are to be observed. We find, some persons are placed in such a situation in the world, as that their chief difficulty, with regard to conduct, is not the doing what is prudent when it is known ; for this, in numberless cases, is as easy as the contrary : but to some, the principal exercise is, recollection, and being upon their guard against deceits, the deceits, suppose, of those about them ; against false appearances of reason and prudence. To persons in some situations, the principal exercise, with respect to conduct, is attention, in order to inform themselves what is proper, what is really the reasonable and prudent part to act.

But as I have hitherto gone upon supposition, that men's dissatisfaction with the evidence of religion is not owing to their neglects, or prejudices ; it must be added, on the other hand, in all common reason, and as what the truth of the case plainly requires should be added, that such dissatisfaction possibly may be owing to those, possibly may be men's own fault. For,

If there are any persons who never set themselves heartily, and in earnest, to be informed in religion ; if there are any who secretly wish it may not prove true, and are less attentive to evidence than to difficulties, and more to objections than to what is said in answer to them ; these persons will scarcely be thought in a likely way of seeing the evidence of religion, though it were most certainly true, and capable of being ever so fully proved. If any accustom themselves to consider this subject usually in the way of mirth and sport ; if they attend to forms and representations, and inadequate manners of expression, instead of the real things intended by them, (for signs often can be no more than inadequately expressive of the things signified,) or if they substitute human errors in the room of divine truth ; why may not all, or any of these things, hinder some men from seeing that evidence which really is seen by others ; as a like turn of mind, with respect to matters of common speculation and practice, does, we find by experience, hinder them from attaining that knowledge and right understanding, in matters of common speculation and practice, which more fair and attentive minds attain to ? And the effect will be the same, whether their neglect of seriously considering the evidence of religion, and their indirect behaviour with regard to it, proceed from mere carelessness, or from the grosser vices ; or whether it be owing to this, that forms, and figurative manners of expression, as well as errors, administer occasions of ridicule, when the things intended, and the truth itself, would not. Men may in-

dulge a ludicrous turn so far, as to lose all sense of conduct and prudence in worldly affairs, and even, as it seems, to impair their faculty of reason. And, in general, levity, carelessness, passion, and prejudice, do hinder us from being rightly informed, with respect to common things; and they may, in like manner, and perhaps in some farther providential manner, with respect to moral and religious subjects; may hinder evidence from being laid before us, and from being seen when it is. The Scripture\* does declare, “that every one shall not understand.” And it makes no difference by what providential conduct this comes to pass; whether the evidence of Christianity was, originally and with design, put and left so, as that those who are desirous of evading moral obligations, should not see it, and that honest-minded persons should; or whether it comes to pass by any other means.

Farther, the general proof of natural religion and of Christianity, does, I think, lie level to common men, even those, the greatest part of whose time, from childhood to old age, is taken up with providing for themselves and their families, the common conveniences, perhaps necessities of life; those, I mean, of this rank, who ever think at all of asking after proof, or attending to it. Common men, were they as much in earnest about religion as about their temporal affairs, are capable of being convinced upon real evidence, that there is a God who governs the world; and they feel themselves to be of a moral nature, and accountable creatures. And as Christianity entirely falls in with this their natural sense of things; so they are capable, not only of being persuaded, but of being made to see, that there is evidence of miracles wrought in attestation of it, and many appearing completions of prophecy. But though this proof is real and conclusive, yet it is liable to objections, and may be run up into difficulties; which, however, persons who are capable, not only of talking of, but of really seeing, are capable also of seeing through; *i. e.* not of clearing up and answering them, so as to satisfy their curiosity, for of such knowledge we are not capable with respect to any one thing in na-

\* Dan. xii. 10. See also Isa. xxix. 13, 14. Matt. vi. 23, and xi. 25, and xiii. 11, 12. John iii. 19. John v. 44. 1 Cor. ii. 14, and 2 Cor. iv. 4. 2 Tim. iii. 13; and that affectionate, as well as authoritative admonition, so very many times inculcated, “He that hath ears to hear let him hear.” Grotius saw so strongly the thing intended in these and other passages of Scripture of the like sense, as to say, that the proof given us of Christianity was less than it might have been, for this very purpose: *Ut ita Sermo Evangelii tanquam lapis esset Lydius ad quem ingenia sanabilia explorarentur.* De Ver. R. C. L. 2. towards the end.



; but capable of seeing that the proof is not lost in these subtleties, or destroyed by these objections. But then a thorough examination into religion, with regard to these objections, which cannot be the business of every man, is a matter of pretty large compass, and from the nature of it, requires a knowledge, as well as time and attention, to see how the balance comes out, upon balancing one thing with another, and that, upon the whole, is the amount of it. Now, if persons have picked up these objections from others, and take for granted they are of weight, upon the word of those from whom they received them, or, by often retailing of them, come to see, in consequence they see, them to be of weight, will not prepare themselves for such an examination, with a competent degree of knowledge; or will not give that time and attention to the subject, which, from the nature of it, is necessary for attaining true information: in this case, they must remain in doubtful ignorance, or error; in the same way as they must, with regard to common sciences, and matters of common life, if they neglect the necessary means of being informed in them.

But still, perhaps, it will be objected, that if a prince or common master were to send directions to a servant, he would take care, that they should always bear the certain marks who they came from, and that their sense should be always plain; so that there should be no possible doubt, if he could help it, concerning the authority or meaning of them. Now, the proper answer to all this kind of objections is, that, wherever the authority lies, it is even certain we cannot argue thus with respect to him who is the Governor of the world: and particularly that he does not afford us such information with respect to our temporal affairs and interests, as experience abundantly shows. However, there is a full answer to this objection, from the very nature of religion. For, the reason why a prince would give his directions in this plain manner, is, that he absolutely requires such an external action should be done, without concerning himself with the motive or principle upon which it is done: *i. e.* he regards only the external event, or the thing's being done, and not at all, properly speaking, the doing of it, or the action. Whereas the whole of morality and religion concerning merely in action itself, there is no sort of parallel between the cases. But if the prince be supposed to regard only the action; *i. e.* only to desire to exercise, or in any sense prove, the understanding or loyalty of a servant, he would not always give his orders in such a plain manner. It may be proper to add, that the will of God, respecting morality and religion, may

be considered, either as absolute, or as only conditional. If it be absolute, it can only be thus, that we should act virtuously in such given circumstances ; not that we should be brought to act so, by his changing of our circumstances. And if God's will be thus absolute, then it is in our power, in the highest and strictest sense, to do or to contradict his will, which is the most weighty consideration. Or his will may be considered only as conditional, that if we act so and so, we shall be rewarded ; if otherwise, punished : of which conditional will of the Author of nature, the whole constitution of it affords most certain instances.

Upon the whole : That we are in a state of religion, necessarily implies, that we are in a state of probation : And the credibility of our being at all in such a state being admitted, there seems no peculiar difficulty in supposing our probation to be, just as it is, in those respects which are above objected against. There seems no pretence from *the reason of the thing*, to say, that the trial cannot equitably be any thing, but whether persons will act suitably to certain information, or such as admits no room for doubt ; so as that there can be no danger of miscarriage, but either from their not attending to what they certainly know, or from overbearing passion hurrying them on to act contrary to it. For, since ignorance and doubt afford scope for probation in all senses, as really as intuitive conviction or certainty ; and since the two former are to be put to the same account as difficulties in practice ; men's moral probation may also be, whether they will take due care to inform themselves by impartial consideration, and afterwards whether they will act as the case requires, upon the evidence which they have, however doubtful. And this, we find by *experience*, is frequently our probation, (pages 260, 391, 393,) in our temporal capacity. For the information which we want, with regard to our worldly interests, is by no means always given us of course, without any care of our own. And we are greatly liable to self-deceit from inward secret prejudices, and also to the deceits of others. So that to be able to judge what is the prudent part, often requires much and difficult consideration. Then after we have judged the very best we can, the evidence upon which we must act, if we will live and act at all, is perpetually doubtful to a very high degree. And the constitution and course of the world in fact is such, as that want of impartial consideration what we have to do, and venturing upon extravagant courses ; because it is doubtful what will be the consequence, are often naturally, *i. e.* providentially, altogether as

1, as misconduct occasioned by heedless inattention, to what certainly know, or disregarding it from overbearing passion. Several of the observations here made may well seem strange, perhaps unintelligible, to many good men. But if the persons whose sake they are made, think so; persons who object above, and throw off all regard to religion under pretence of want of evidence; I desire them to consider again whether their making so, be owing to any thing unintelligible in these observations, or to their own not having such a sense of religious serious solicitude about it, as even their state of scepticism in all reason require? It ought to be forced upon the reflection of these persons, that our nature and condition necessarily require us, in the daily course of life, to act upon evidence much lower than what is commonly called probable; to stand, not only against what we fully believe will, but also against what we think it supposable may, happen; and to engage in pursuits when the probability is greatly against success, to be credible that possibly we may succeed in them.

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## CHAP. VII.

### OF THE PARTICULAR EVIDENCE FOR CHRISTIANITY.

THE presumptions against revelation, and objections against the general scheme of Christianity, and particular things relating to it, being removed, there remains to be considered, what positive evidence we have for the truth of it; chiefly in order to see, what the analogy of nature suggests with regard to that evidence, and the objections against it; or to see what is, and allowed to be, the plain natural rule of judgment and of action, in our temporal concerns, in cases where we have the same kind of evidence, and the same kind of objections against it, that we have in the case before us.

Now, in the evidence of Christianity, there seem to be several things of great weight, not reducible to the head, either of miracles, or the completion of prophecy, in the common acceptation of the words. But these two are its direct and fundamental proofs; and those other things, however considerable they are, ought never to be urged apart from its direct proofs, but always to be joined with them. Thus the evidence of Christianity will be a long series of things, reaching, as it seems, from

the beginning of the world to the present time, of great variety and compass, taking in both the direct, and also the collateral proofs, and making up, all of them together, one argument; the conviction arising from which kind of proof may be compared to what they call *the effect* in architecture or other works of art; a result from a great number of things so and so disposed, and taken into one view. I shall therefore, *first*, make some observations relating to miracles, and the appearing completions of prophecy; and consider what analogy suggests, in answer to the objections brought against this evidence. And, *secondly*, I shall endeavour to give some account of the general argument now mentioned, consisting both of the direct and collateral evidence, considered as making up one argument: this being the kind of proof, upon which we determine most questions of difficulty concerning common facts, alleged to have happened, or seeming likely to happen; especially questions relating to conduct.

*First*, I shall make some observations upon the direct proof of Christianity from miracles and prophecy, and upon the objections alleged against it.

I. Now, the following observations, relating to the historical evidence of miracles wrought in attestation of Christianity, appear to be of great weight.

1. The Old Testament affords us the same historical evidence of the miracles of Moses and of the prophets, as of the common civil history of Moses and the kings of Israel; or, as of the affairs of the Jewish nation. And the Gospels and the Acts afford us the same historical evidence of the miracles of Christ and the apostles, as of the common matters related in them. This, indeed, could not have been affirmed by any reasonable man, if the authors of these books, like many other historians, had appeared to make an entertaining manner of writing their aim; though they had interspersed miracles in their works, at proper distances, and upon proper occasions. These might have animated a dull relation, amused the reader, and engaged his attention. And the same account would naturally have been given of them, as of the speeches and descriptions of such authors; the same account, in a manner, as is to be given, why the poets make use of wonders and prodigies. But the facts, both miraculous and natural, in Scripture, are related in plain unadorned narratives; and both of them appear, in all respects, to stand upon the same foot of historical evidence. Farther; some parts of Scripture containing an account of miracles fully sufficient to prove the truth of Christianity, are quoted as ge-

ruine, from the age in which they are said to be written, down to the present ; and no other parts of them, material in the present question, are omitted to be quoted in such manner, as to afford any sort of proof of their not being genuine. And, as common history, when called in question in any instance, may often be greatly confirmed by contemporary or subsequent events more known and acknowledged ; and as the common Scripture history, like many others, is thus confirmed ; so likewise is the miraculous history of it, not only in particular instances, but in general. For, the establishment of the Jewish and Christian religions, which were events contemporary with the miracles related to be wrought in attestation of both, or subsequent to them, these events are just what we should have expected, upon supposition such miracles were really wrought to attest the truth of those religions. These miracles are a satisfactory account of those events ; of which no other satisfactory account can be given, nor any account at all, but what is imaginary merely and invented. It is to be added, that the most obvious, the most easy and direct account of this history, how it came to be written and to be received in the world as a true history, is, that it really is so ; nor can any other account of it be easy and direct. Now, though an account, not at all obvious, but very far-fetched and indirect, may indeed be, and often is, the true account of a matter ; yet it cannot be admitted on the authority of its being asserted. Mere guess, supposition, and possibility, when opposed to historical evidence, prove nothing, but that historical evidence is not demonstrative.

Now, the just consequence from all this, I think, is, that the Scripture history, in general, is to be admitted as an authentic genuine history, till somewhat positive be alleged sufficient to invalidate it. But no man will deny the consequence to be, that it cannot be rejected, or thrown by as of no authority, till it can be proved to be of none ; even though the evidence now mentioned for its authority were doubtful. This evidence may be confronted by historical evidence on the other side, if there be any ; or general incredibility in the things related, or inconsistency in the general turn of the history, would prove it to be of no authority. But since, upon the face of the matter, upon a first and general view, the appearance is, that it is an authentic history, it cannot be determined to be fictitious without some proof that it is so. And the following observations, in support of these and coincident with them, will greatly confirm the historical evidence for the truth of Christianity.

2. The epistles of St. Paul, from the nature of epistolary writing, and moreover, from several of them being written, not to particular persons, but to churches, carry in them evidences of their being genuine, beyond what can be, in a mere historical narrative, left to the world at large. This evidence, joined with that which they have in common with the rest of the New Testament, seems not to leave so much as any particular pretence for denying their genuineness, considered as an ordinary matter of fact, or of criticism : I say, *particular* pretence for *denying* it; because any single fact, of such a kind and such antiquity, may have *general doubts* raised concerning it, from the very nature of human affairs and human testimony. There is also to be mentioned, a distinct and particular evidence of the genuineness of the epistle chiefly referred to here, the first to the Corinthians ; from the manner in which it is quoted by *Clemens Romanus*, in an epistle of his own to that church.\* Now, these epistles afford a proof of Christianity, detached from all others, which is, I think, a thing of weight; and also a proof of a nature and kind peculiar to itself. For,

In them the author declares, that he received the gospel in general, and the institution of the communion in particular, not from the rest of the apostles, or jointly together with them, but alone from Christ himself; whom he declares, likewise, conformably to the history in the Acts, that he saw after his ascension.† So that the testimony of St. Paul is to be considered, as detached from that of the rest of the apostles.

And he declares farther, that he was endued with a power of working miracles, as what was publicly known to those very people ; speaks of frequent and great variety of miraculous gifts, as then subsisting in those very churches to which he was writing ; which he was reproofing for several irregularities ; and where he had personal opposers : He mentions these gifts incidentally, in the most easy manner, and without effort ; by way of reproof to those who had them, for their indecent use of them ; and by way of depreciating them, in comparison of moral virtues. In short, he speaks to these churches of these miraculous powers, in the manner any one would speak to another of a thing, which was as familiar, and as much known in common to them both, as any thing in the world.‡ And this, as hath

\* Clem. Rom. Ep. i. c. 47.

† Gal. i. 1 Cor. xi. 23, &c. 1 Cor. xv. 8.

‡ Romans xv. 19, 1 Corinthians xii. 8, 9, 10—28, &c. and chapter xiii. 1, 2, 8, and the whole xivth chapter. 2 Corinthians xii. 12, 13. Galatians iii. 2, 5.

been observed by several persons, is surely a very considerable thing.

3. It is an acknowledged historical fact, that Christianity offered itself to the world, and demanded to be received, upon the allegation, *i. e.* as unbelievers would speak upon the pretence of miracles, publicly wrought to attest the truth of it, in such an age; and that it was actually received by great numbers in that very age, and upon the professed belief of the reality of these miracles. And Christianity, including the dispensation of the Old Testament, seems distinguished by this from all other religions. I mean, that this does not appear to be the case with regard to any other: For surely it will not be supposed to lie upon any person, to prove, by positive historical evidence, that it was not. It does in no sort appear that Mahometanism was first received in the world upon the foot of supposed miracles, \* *i. e.* public ones; for, as revelation is itself miraculous, all pretence to it must necessarily imply some pretence of miracles. And it is a known fact, that it was immediately, at the very first, propagated by other means. And as particular institutions, whether in paganism or popery, said to be confirmed by miracles after those institutions had obtained, are not to the purpose; so, were there what might be called historical proof, that any of them were introduced by a supposed divine command, believed to be attested by miracles, these would not be in anywise parallel. For single things of this sort are easy to be accounted for, after parties are formed, and have power in their hands; and the leaders of them are in veneration with the multitude; and political interests are blended with religious claims, and religious distinctions. But before any thing of this kind, for a few persons, and those of the lowest rank, all at once, to bring over such great numbers to a new religion, and get it to be received upon the particular evidence of miracles; this is quite another thing. And I think it will be allowed by any fair adversary, that the fact now mentioned, taking in all the circumstances of it, is peculiar to the Christian religion. However, the fact itself is allowed, that Christianity obtained, *i. e.* was professed to be received in the world, upon the belief of miracles, immediately in the age in which it is said those miracles were wrought: or that this is what its first converts would have alleged, as the reason for their embracing it. Now, certainly it is not to be

\* See the Koran, chapter xiii. and chapter xvii.



supposed, that such numbers of men, in the most distant parts of the world, should forsake the religion of their country, in which they had been educated ; separate themselves from their friends, particularly in their festival shows and solemnities, to which the common people are so greatly addicted, and which were of a nature to engage them much more than any thing of that sort amongst us ; and embrace a religion, which could not but expose them to many inconveniences, and indeed must have been a giving up the world in a great degree, even from the very first, and before the empire engaged in form against them : it cannot be supposed, that such numbers should make so great, and to say the least, so inconvenient a change in their whole institution of life, unless they were really convinced of the truth of those miracles, upon the knowledge or belief of which they professed to make it. And it will, I suppose, readily be acknowledged, that the generality of the first converts to Christianity must have believed them ; that as, by becoming Christians, they declared to the world they were satisfied of the truth of those miracles, so this declaration was to be credited. And this their testimony is the same kind of evidence for those miracles, as if they had put it in writing, and these writings had come down to us. And it is real evidence, because it is of facts which they had capacity and full opportunity to inform themselves of. It is also distinct from the direct or express historical evidence, though it is of the same kind ; and it would be allowed to be distinct in all cases. For, were a fact expressly related by one or more ancient historians, and disputed in after-ages ; that this fact is acknowledged to have been believed, by great numbers of the age in which the historian says it was done, would be allowed an additional proof of such fact, quite distinct from the express testimony of the historian. The credulity of mankind is acknowledged, and the suspicions of mankind ought to be acknowledged too ; and their backwardness even to believe, and greater still to practise, what makes against their interest. And it must particularly be remembered, that education, and prejudice, and authority, were against Christianity, in the age I am speaking of. So that the immediate conversion of such numbers, is a real presumption of somewhat more than human in this matter ; I say presumption, for it is not alleged as a proof, alone and by itself. Nor need any one of the things mentioned in this chapter be considered as a proof by itself ; and yet all of them together may be one of the strongest.

Upon the whole : as there is large historical evidence, both

direct and circumstantial, of miracles wrought in attestation of Christianity, collected by those who have written upon the subject; it lies upon unbelievers to shew, why this evidence is not to be credited. This way of speaking is, I think, just, and what persons who write in defence of religion naturally fall into. Yet, in a matter of such unspeakable importance, the proper question is, not whom it lies upon, according to the rules of argument, to maintain or confute objections; but whether there really are any, against this evidence, sufficient, in reason, to destroy the credit of it? However, unbelievers seem to take upon them the part of shewing that there are.

They allege, that numberless enthusiastic people, in different ages and countries, expose themselves to the same difficulties which the primitive Christians did; and are ready to give up their lives, for the most idle follies imaginable. But it is not very clear, to what purpose this objection is brought. For every one, surely, in every case, must distinguish between opinions and facts. And though testimony is no proof of enthusiastic opinions, or of any opinions at all; yet, it is allowed, in all other cases, to be a proof of facts. And a person's laying down his life in attestation of facts or of opinions, is the strongest proof of his believing them. And if the apostles and their contemporaries did believe the facts, in attestation of which they exposed themselves to sufferings and death, this their belief, or rather knowledge, must be a proof of those facts; for they were such as came under the observation of their senses. And though it is not of equal weight, yet it is of weight, that the martyrs of the next age, notwithstanding they were not eye-witnesses of those facts, as were the apostles and their contemporaries, had, however, full opportunity to inform themselves, whether they were true or not, and gave equal proof of their believing them to be true.

But enthusiasm, it is said, greatly weakens the evidence of testimony even for facts, in matters relating to religion; some seem to think, it totally and absolutely destroys the evidence of testimony upon this subject. And, indeed, the powers of enthusiasm, and of diseases, too, which operate in a like manner, are very wonderful, in particular instances. But if great numbers of men, not appearing in any peculiar degree weak, nor under any peculiar suspicion of negligence, affirm that they saw and heard such things plainly with their eyes and their ears, and are admitted to be in earnest; such testimony is evidence of the strongest kind we can have for any matter of fact. Yet, possibly it may be overcome, strong as it is, by incredi-

bility in the things thus attested, or by contrary testimony. And in an instance where one thought it was so overcome, it might be just to consider, how far such evidence could be accounted for by enthusiasm ; for it seems as if no other imaginable account were to be given of it. But till such incredibility be shewn, or contrary testimony produced, it cannot surely be expected, that so far-fetched, so indirect and wonderful an account of such testimony, as that of enthusiasm must be ; an account so strange, that the generality of mankind can scarce be made to understand what is meant by it ; it cannot, I say, be expected, that such account will be admitted of such evidence, when there is this direct, easy, and obvious account of it, that people really saw and heard a thing not incredible, which they affirm sincerely, and with full assurance, they did see and hear. Granting, then, that enthusiasm is not (strictly speaking) an absurd, but a possible account of such testimony, it is manifest that the very mention of it goes upon the previous supposition, that the things so attested are incredible ; and therefore need not be considered, till they are shewn to be so. Much less need it be considered, after the contrary has been proved. And I think it has been proved, to full satisfaction, that there is no incredibility in a revelation, in general, or in such an one as the Christian, in particular. However, as religion is supposed peculiarly liable to enthusiasm, it may just be observed, that prejudices almost without number and without name, romance, affectation, humour, a desire to engage attention or to surprise, the party-spirit, custom, little competitions, unaccountable likings and dislikings ; these influence men strongly in common matters. And as these prejudices are often scarce known or reflected upon by the persons themselves who are influenced by them, they are to be considered as influences of a like kind to enthusiasm. Yet human testimony in common matters is naturally and justly believed notwithstanding.

It is intimated farther, in a more refined way of observation, that though it should be proved, that the apostles and first Christians could not, in some respects, be deceived themselves, and, in other respects, cannot be thought to have intended to impose upon the world, yet, it will not follow, that their general testimony is to be believed, though truly handed down to us ; because they might still in part, *i. e.* in other respects, be deceived themselves, and in part also designedly impose upon others ; which, it is added, is a thing very credible, from that mixture of real enthusiasm, and real knavery, to be met with in the same characters. And, I must confess, I think the mat-

ter of fact contained in this observation upon mankind, is not to be denied ; and that somewhat very much akin to it, is often supposed in Scripture as a very common case, and most severely reprobated. But it were to have been expected, that persons capable of applying this observation as applied in the objection, might also frequently have met with the like mixed character, in instances where religion was quite out of the case. The thing plainly is, that mankind are naturally endued with reason, or a capacity of distinguishing between truth and falsehood ; and as naturally they are endued with veracity, or a regard to truth in what they say ; but from many occasions, they are liable to be prejudiced, and biassed, and deceived themselves, and capable of intending to deceive others, in every different degree ; inso-much that, as we are all liable to be deceived by prejudice, so likewise it seems to be not an uncommon thing, for persons, who, from their regard to truth, would not invent a lie entirely without any foundation at all, to propagate it with heightening circumstances, after it is once invented and set agoing. And others, though they would not *propagate* a lie, yet, which is a lower degree of falsehood, will let it pass without contradiction. But, notwithstanding all this, human testimony remains still a natural ground of assent ; and this assent, a natural principle of action.

It is objected farther, that however it has happened, the *fact* is, that mankind have, in different ages, been strangely deluded with pretences to miracles and wonders. But it is by no means to be admitted, that they have been oftener, or are at all more liable to be deceived by these pretences, than by others.

It is added, that there is a very considerable degree of historical evidence for miracles, which are, on all hands, acknowledged to be fabulous. But suppose there were even *the like* historical evidence for these, to what there is for those alleged in proof of Christianity, which yet is in nowise allowed, but suppose this ; the consequence would not be, that the evidence of the latter is not to be admitted. Nor is there a man in the world who, in common cases, would conclude thus. For what would such a conclusion really amount to but this, that evidence confuted by contrary evidence, or any way overbalanced, destroys the credibility of other evidence, neither confuted, nor overbalanced ? To argue, that because there is, if there were, like evidence from testimony, for miracles acknowledged false, as for those in attestation of Christianity, therefore the evidence in the latter case is not to be credited ; this is the same as to argue, that if two men of equally good reputation had given evidence in dif-

ferent cases no way connected, and one of them had been convicted of perjury, this confuted the testimony of the other.

Upon the whole, then, the general observation that human creatures are so liable to be deceived, from enthusiasm in religion, and principles equivalent to enthusiasm in common matters, and in both from negligence; and that they are so capable of dishonestly endeavouring to deceive others; this does indeed weaken the evidence of testimony in all cases, but does not destroy it in any. And these things will appear, to different men, to weaken the evidence of testimony, in different degrees; in degrees proportionable to the observations they have made, or the notions they have any way taken up, concerning the weakness, and negligence, and dishonesty of mankind; or concerning the powers of enthusiasm, and prejudices equivalent to it. But it seems to me, that people do not know what they say, who affirm these things to destroy the evidence from testimony, which we have of the truth of Christianity. Nothing can destroy the evidence of testimony in any case, but a proof or probability, that persons are not competent judges of the facts to which they give testimony; or that they are actually under some indirect influence in giving it, in such particular case. Till this be made out, the *natural* laws of human actions require, that testimony be admitted. It can never be sufficient to overthrow direct historical evidence, indolently to say, that there are so many principles from whence men are liable to be deceived themselves and disposed to deceive others, especially in matters of religion, that one knows not what to believe. And it is surprising persons can help reflecting, that this very manner of speaking supposes they are not satisfied that there is nothing in the evidence, of which they speak thus; or that they can avoid observing, if they do make this reflection, that it is, on such a subject, a very material one. (See the foregoing chapter.)

And over against all these objections, is to be set the importance of Christianity, as what must have engaged the attention of its first converts, so as to have rendered them less liable to be deceived from carelessness, than they would in common matters; and likewise the strong obligations to veracity, which their religion laid them under: so that the first and most obvious presumption is, that they could not be deceived themselves, nor would deceive others. And this presumption, in this degree, is peculiar to the testimony we have been considering.

In argument, assertions are nothing in themselves, and have an air of positiveness, which sometimes is not very easy: yet they are necessary, and necessary to be repeated, in order to

connect a discourse, and distinctly to lay before the view of the reader what is proposed to be proved, and what is left as proved. Now, the conclusion from the foregoing observations is, I think, beyond all doubt, this: that unbelievers must be forced to admit the external evidence for Christianity, *i. e.* the proof of miracles wrought to attest it, to be of real weight and very considerable; though they cannot allow it to be sufficient to convince them of the reality of those miracles. And as they must in all reason admit this, so it seems to me, that upon consideration they would, in fact, admit it; those of them, I mean, who know any thing at all of the matter; in like manner, as persons in many cases own they see strong evidence from testimony, for the truth of things, which yet they cannot be convinced are true; cases, suppose, where there is contrary testimony, or things which they think, whether with or without reason, to be incredible. But there is no testimony contrary to that which we have been considering; and it has been fully proved, that there is no incredibility in Christianity in general, or in any part of it.

II. As to the evidence for Christianity from prophecy, I shall only make some few general observations, which are suggested by the analogy of nature; *i. e.* by the acknowledged natural rules of judging in common matters, concerning evidence of a like kind to this from prophecy.

1. The obscurity or unintelligibleness of one part of a prophecy, does not, in any degree, invalidate the proof of foresight, arising from the appearing completion of those other parts which are understood. For the case is evidently the same, as if those parts, which are not understood, were lost, or not written at all, or written in an unknown tongue. Whether this observation be commonly attended to or not, it is so evident, that one can scarce bring one's self to set down an instance in common matters, to exemplify it. However, suppose a writing, partly in cypher, and partly in plain words at length, and that, in the part one understood, there appeared mention of several known facts; it would never come into man's thoughts to imagine, that if he understood the whole, perhaps he might find that those facts were not, in reality, known by the writer. Indeed, both in this example, and the thing intended to be exemplified by it, our not understanding the whole (the whole, suppose, of a sentence or a paragraph) might sometimes occasion a doubt, whether one understood the literal meaning of such a part; but this comes under another consideration.

For the same reason, though a man should be incapable for

want of learning, or opportunities of inquiry, or from not having turned his studies this way, even so much as to judge, whether particular prophecies have been throughout completely fulfilled ; yet he may see, in general, that they have been fulfilled to such a degree, as, upon very good ground, to be convinced of foresight more than human in such prophecies, and of such events being intended by them. For the same reason also, though, by means of the deficiencies in civil history, and the different accounts of historians, the most learned should not be able to make out to satisfaction, that such parts of the prophetic history have been minutely and throughout fulfilled ; yet a very strong proof of foresight may arise, from that general completion of them which is made out ; as much proof of foresight, perhaps, as the Giver of prophecy intended should ever be afforded by such parts of prophecy.

2. A long series of prophecy being applicable to such and such events, is itself a proof, that it was intended of them ; as the rules, by which we naturally judge and determine, in common cases parallel to this, will shew. This observation I make in answer to the common objection against the application of the prophecies, that considering each of them distinctly by itself, it does not at all appear, that they were intended of those particular events to which they are applied by Christians ; and therefore, it is to be supposed, that, if they meant any thing, they were intended of other events unknown to us, and not of these at all.

Now, there are two kinds of writing, which bear a great resemblance to prophecy, with respect to the matter before us : the mythological and the satirical, where the satire is, to a certain degree, concealed. And a man might be assured, that he understood what an author intended by a fable or parable, related without any application or moral, merely from seeing it to be easily capable of such application, and that such a moral might naturally be deduced from it. And he might be fully assured, that such persons and events were intended in a satirical writing, merely from its being applicable to them. And agreeably to the last observation, he might be in a good measure satisfied of it, though he were not enough informed in affairs, or in the story of such persons, to understand half the satire. For his satisfaction that he understood the meaning, the intended meaning, of these writings, would be greater or less, in proportion as he saw the general turn of them to be capable of such application, and in proportion to the number of particular things capable of it. And thus, if a long series of prophecy



s applicable to the present state of the church, and to the political situations of the kingdoms of the world, some thousand years after these prophecies were delivered, and a long series of prophecy delivered before the coming of Christ is applicable to him ; these things are in themselves a proof, that the prophetic history was intended of him, and of those events : in proportion as the general turn of it is capable of such application, and to the number and variety of particular prophecies capable of it. And, though in all just way of consideration, the appearing completion of prophecies is to be allowed to be thus explanatory of, and to determine their meaning ; yet it is to be remembered farther, that the ancient Jews applied the prophecies to a Messiah before his coming, in much the same manner as Christians do now ; and that the primitive Christians interpreted the prophecies respecting the state of the church and of the world in the last ages, in the sense which the event seems to confirm and verify. And from these things it may be made appear,

3. That the shewing, even to a high probability, if that would be, that the prophets thought of some other events, in such and such predictions, and not those at all which Christians allege to be completions of those predictions ; or that such and such prophecies are capable of being applied to other events than those to which Christians apply them—that this would not confute or destroy the force of the argument from prophecy, even with regard to those very instances. For, observe how this matter really is. If one knew such a person to be the sole author of such a book, and was certainly assured, or satisfied to any degree, that one knew the whole of what he intended in it, one should be assured or satisfied to such degree, that one knew the whole meaning of that book ; for the meaning of a book is nothing but the meaning of the author. But if one knew a person to have compiled a book out of memoirs, which he received from another of vastly superior knowledge in the subject of it, especially if it were a book full of great intricacies and difficulties, it would in nowise follow, that one knew the whole meaning of the book, from knowing the whole meaning of the compiler ; for the original memoirs, *i. e.* the author of them might have, and there would be no degree of presumption, in many cases, against supposing him to have some farther meaning than the compiler saw. To say, then, that the Scriptures and the things contained in them can have no other or farther meaning than those persons thought or had, who first recited or wrote them, is evidently saying, that those persons

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original, proper, and sole authors of those books, *i. e.* they are not inspired ; which is absurd, whilst the authority of these books is under examination, *i. e.* till you have demonstrated that they are of no divine authority at all. Till this be proved, it must in all reason be supposed, not indeed that they are inspired, for this is taking for granted that they are inspired, but that they may have some farther meaning than what the prophets saw or understood. And, upon this supposition, it is reasonable also, that this farther meaning may be fulfilled in events corresponding to prophecies, interpreted in a different meaning from that in which the prophets are supposed to have understood them ; this affords, in a manner, the same proof that this different sense was originally intended, as it would have afforded if the prophets had not understood their prophecies in the sense it is supposed they did ; because there is no presumption of their sense of them being the whole sense.

And it has been already shewn, that the apparent fulfilment of prophecies must be allowed to be explanatory of the prophecies. So that the question is, whether a series of prophecies has been fulfilled, in a natural or proper, *i. e.* in any sense of the words of it. For such completion is equally a proof of foresight more than human, whether the prophets are or are not supposed to have understood it in a different

niel, and how much the general scheme of Christianity presupposes the truth of it. But even this discovery, had there been any such,\* would be of very little weight with reasonable men now; if this passage, thus applicable to events before the age of Porphyry, appears to be applicable also to events, which succeeded the dissolution of the Roman empire. I mention this, not at all as intending to insinuate, that the division of this empire into ten parts, for it plainly was divided into about that number, were, alone and by itself, of any moment in verifying the prophetic history; but only as an example of the thing I am speaking of. And thus, upon the whole, the matter of inquiry evidently must be, as above put, Whether the prophecies are applicable to Christ, and to the present state of the world and of the church; applicable in such a degree as to imply foresight: not whether they are capable of any other application; though I know no pretence for saying, the general turn of them is capable of any other.

These observations are, I think, just, and the evidence referred to in them, real; though there may be people who will not accept of such imperfect information from Scripture. Some too have not integrity and regard enough to truth, to attend to evidence, which keeps the mind in doubt, perhaps perplexity, and which is much of a different sort from what they expected. And it plainly requires a degree of modesty and fairness, beyond what every one has, for a man to say, not to the world, but to himself, that there is a real appearance of somewhat of great weight in this matter, though he is not able thoroughly to satisfy himself about it; but it shall have its influence upon him, in proportion to its appearing reality and weight. It is much more easy, and more falls in with the negligence, presumption, and wilfulness of the generality, to determine at once, with a decisive air, there is nothing in it. The prejudices arising from that absolute contempt and scorn, with which this evidence is treated in the world, I do not mention. For what indeed can be said to persons, who are weak enough in their understandings to think this any presumption against it; or if they do not, are yet weak enough in their temper to be influenced by such prejudices, upon such a subject.

\* It appears, that Prophecy did nothing worth mentioning in this way. For Jerom on the place says:—*Duas posteriores bestias—in uno Macedonum regno ponit.* And as to the ten kings; *Decem reges enumerat, qui fuerunt sarraceni; ipsosque reges non unius ponit regni, verbi gratia, Macedonia, Syria, Asia, et Egypti; sed de diversis regnis unum efficit regnum ordinem.* And in this way of interpretation, any thing may be made of any thing.

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now, *secondly*, endeavour to give some account of the argument for the truth of Christianity, consisting both of direct and circumstantial evidence, considered as making an argument. Indeed, to state and examine this argument would be a work much beyond the compass of this whole, nor is so much as a proper abridgment of it to be expected. Yet the present subject requires to have some account of it given. For it is the kind of evidence upon most questions of difficulty, in common practice, are dependent, evidence arising from various coincidences, which confirm each other, and in this manner prove, with less certainty, the point under consideration. And I do it also, *first*, because it seems to be of the greatest importance, and not duly attended to by every one, that the revelation is, not some direct and express things only, but a great variety of circumstantial things also; and that each of these direct and circumstantial things is indeed considered separately, yet they are afterwards to be joined together; for that the proper force of the evidence consists in the result of those several things, considered in their respects to each other, and united into one view; and, in the next place, it seems to me, that the matters of fact here set down, which are acknowledged by unbelievers, must be acknowledged

mankind out of their present wretched condition, and raising them to the perfection and final happiness of their nature.

This revelation, whether real or supposed, may be considered as wholly historical. For prophecy is nothing but the history of events before they come to pass; doctrines also are matters of fact; and precepts come under the same notion. And the general design of Scripture, which contains in it this revelation, thus considered as historical, may be said to be, to give us an account of the world, in this one single view, as God's world; by which it appears essentially distinguished from all other books, so far as I have found, except such as are copied from it. It begins with an account of God's creation of the world, in order to ascertain and distinguish from all others, who is the object of our worship, by what he has done; in order to ascertain who he is, concerning whose providence, commands, promises, and threatenings, this sacred book all along treats; the Maker and Proprietor of the world, he whose creatures we are, the God of nature: in order likewise to distinguish him from the idols of the nations, which are either imaginary beings, *i. e.* no beings at all; or else part of that creation, the historical relation of which is here given. And St. John, not improbably with an eye to this Mosaic account of the creation, begins his Gospel with an account of our Saviour's pre-existence, and that "all things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made;" (John i. 3.) agreeably to the doctrine of St. Paul, that "God created all things by Jesus Christ." (Eph. iii. 9.) This being premised, the Scripture, taken together, seems to profess to contain a kind of an abridgment of the history of the world, in the view just now mentioned; that is, a general account of the condition of religion and its professors, during the continuance of that apostasy from God, and state of wickedness, which it every where supposes the world to lie in. And this account of the state of religion carries with it some brief account of the political state of things, as religion is affected by it. Revelation indeed considers the common affairs of this world, and what is going on in it, as a mere scene of distraction, and cannot be supposed to concern itself with foretelling at what time Rome, or Babylon, or Greece, or any particular place, should be the most conspicuous seat of that tyranny and dissoluteness, which all places equally aspire to be; cannot, I say, be supposed to give any account of this wild scene for its own sake. But it seems to contain some very general account of the chief governments of the world, as the general state of religion has been, is, or shall

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ed by them, from the first transgression, and during the interval of the world's continuing in its present state, in future period, spoken of both in the Old and New Testament, very distinctly, and in great variety of expression: "times of the restitution of all things;" (Acts iii. 21.) "the mystery of God shall be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets;" (Rev. x. 7.) when "the heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people." (Dan. vii. 27.) as it is represented to be during this apostasy, but "the kingdom shall be given to the saints," (Dan. vii. 22.) and "they shall reign;" (Rev.) "and the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." (Rev. xi.)

In this general view of the Scripture, I would remark that at a length of time the whole relation takes up, near six thousand years of which are past; and how great a variety of subjects it treats of; the natural and moral system or history of the world, including the time when it was formed, all contained in the very first book, and evidently written in a rude and unpolished language; and in subsequent books, the various common and particular history, and the particular dispensation of Christian-

Together with the moral system of the world, the Old Testament contains a chronological account of the beginning of it, and from thence, an unbroken genealogy of mankind for many ages before common history begins; and carried on as much farther, as to make up a continued thread of history of the length of between three and four thousand years. It contains an account of God's making a covenant with a particular nation, that they should be his people, and he would be their God, in a peculiar sense; of his often interposing miraculously in their affairs; giving them the promise, and, long after, the possession, of a particular country; assuring them of the greatest national prosperity in it, if they would worship him, in opposition to the idols which the rest of the world worshipped, and obey his commands; and threatening them with unexampled punishments, if they disobeyed him, and fell into the general idolatry: insomuch, that this one nation should continue to be the observation and the wonder of all the world. It declares particularly, that "God would scatter them among all people, from one end of the earth unto the other;" but that "when they should return unto the Lord their God, he would have compassion upon them, and gather them, from all the nations whither he had scattered them;" that "Israel should be saved in the Lord, with an everlasting salvation, and not be ashamed or confounded, world without end." And as some of these promises are conditional, others are as absolute as any thing can be expressed, that the time should come, when "the people should be all righteous, and inherit the land for ever:" that "though God would make a full end of all nations whither he had scattered them, yet would he not make a full end of them;" that "he would bring again the captivity of his people Israel, and plant them upon their land, and they should be no more pulled up out of their land:" that "the seed of Israel should not cease from being a nation for ever."\* It foretels, that God would raise them up a particular person, in whom all his promises should finally be fulfilled; the Messiah, who should be, in an high and eminent sense, their anointed Prince and Saviour. This was foretold in such a manner, as raised a general expectation of such a person in the nation, as appears from the New Testament, and is an acknowledged fact; an expectation of his coming at such a particular time, before any one appeared, claiming to be that person, and when there was no ground for such an expectation but from the prophecies; which expect-

\* Deut. xxviii. 64. Ch. xxx. 2, 3. Isa. xlv. 17. Ch. lx. 21. Jer. xxx. 11. Ch. xlvi. 28. Amos ix. 15. Jer. xxxi. 36.



tation, therefore, must in all reason be presumed to be explanatory of those prophecies, if there were any doubt about their meaning. It seems moreover to foretel, that this person should be rejected by that nation, to whom he had been so long promised, and though he was so much desired by them.\* And it expressly foretels, that he should be the Saviour of the Gentiles; and even that the completion of the scheme contained in this book, and then begun, and in its progress, should be somewhat so great, that, in comparison with it, the restoration of the Jews alone would be but of small account. “It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be for salvation unto the end of the earth.” And, “in the last days, the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow into it—for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations—and the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day, and the idols he shall utterly abolish.”† The Scripture farther contains an account, that at the time the Messiah was expected, a person rose up, in this nation, claiming to be that Messiah, to be the person whom all the prophecies referred to, and in whom they should centre; that he spent some years in a continued course of miraculous works, and endued his immediate disciples and followers with a power of doing the same, as a proof of the truth of that religion which he commissioned them to publish; that, invested with this authority and power, they made numerous converts in the remotest countries, and settled and established his religion in the world; to the end of which, the Scripture professes to give a prophetic account of the state of this religion amongst mankind.

Let us now suppose a person utterly ignorant of history, to have all this related to him, out of the Scripture. Or, suppose such an one, having the Scripture put into his hands, to remark these things in it, not knowing but that the whole, even its civil history, as well as the other parts of it, might be, from beginning to end, an entire invention; and to ask, What truth was in it, and whether the revelation here related was real or a fiction?

\* Isa. viii. 14, 15. Ch. xlix. 5. Ch. liii. Mal. i. 10, 11. and Ch. iii.

† Isa. xlix. 6. Ch. ii. Ch. xi. Ch. lvi. 7. Mal. i. 11.—To which must be added, the other prophecies of the like kind, several in the New Testament, and very many in the Old, which describe what shall be the completion of the revealed plan of Providence.

And, instead of a direct answer, suppose him, all at once, to be told the following confessed facts ; and then to unite them into one view.

Let him first be told, in how great a degree the profession and establishment of natural religion, the belief that there is one God to be worshipped, that virtue is his law, and that mankind shall be rewarded and punished hereafter, as they obey and disobey it here ; in how very great a degree, I say, the profession and establishment of this moral system in the world, is owing to the revelation, whether real or supposed, contained in this book ; the establishment of this moral system, even in those countries which do not acknowledge the proper authority of the Scripture. (Page 385.) Let him be told also, what number of nations do acknowledge its proper authority. Let him then take in the consideration, of what importance religion is to mankind. And upon these things, he might, I think, truly observe, that this supposed revelation's obtaining and being received in the world, with all the circumstances and effects of it considered together as one event, is the most conspicuous and important event in the story of mankind ; that a book of this nature, and thus promulged and recommended to our consideration, demands, as if by a voice from heaven, to have its claims most seriously examined into ; and that, before such examination, to treat it with any kind of scoffing and ridicule, is an offence against natural piety. But it is to be remembered, that how much soever the establishment of natural religion in the world is owing to the Scripture revelation, this does not destroy the proof of religion from reason ; any more than the proof of *Euclid's Elements* is destroyed, by a man's knowing or thinking, that he should never have seen the truth of the several propositions contained in it, nor had those propositions come into his thoughts, but for that mathematician.

Let such a person as we are speaking of, be, in the next place, informed of the acknowledged antiquity of the first parts of this book ; and that its chronology, its account of the time when the earth, and the several parts of it, were first peopled with human creatures, is no way contradicted, but is really confirmed by the natural and civil history of the world, collected from common historians, from the state of the earth, and from the late invention of arts and sciences. And as the Scripture contains an unbroken thread of common and civil history, from the creation to the captivity, for between three and four thousand years ; let the person we are speaking of be told, in the next place, that this general history, as it is not contradicted, but is

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ed by profane history, as much as there would be reason  
upon supposition of its truth ; so there is nothing in  
the history itself to give any reasonable ground of sus-  
pects not being, in the general, a faithful and literally  
genealogy of men, and series of things. I speak here only  
of common Scripture history, or of the course of ordinary  
events related in it, as distinguished from miracles and from  
supernatural history. In all the Scripture narrations of this  
kind, following events arise out of foregoing ones, as in all other

There appears nothing related as done in any age,  
unconformable to the manners of that age ; nothing in the  
course of a succeeding age, which, one would say, could not  
have been probable, from the account of things in the  
preceding one. There is nothing in the characters which  
excite a thought of their being feigned, but all the inter-  
ests imaginable of their being real. It is to be added  
that mere genealogies, bare narratives of the number of  
persons called by such and such names lived, do  
not carry the face of fiction ; perhaps do carry some presump-  
tion of veracity ; and all unadorned narratives which have  
nothing to surprise, may be thought to carry somewhat of the  
presumption too. And the domestic and the political his-  
tory is chiefly credible. There may be incidents in Scripture

bility to its miraculous history ; especially as this is interwoven with the common, so as that they imply each other, and both together make up one relation.

Let it then be more particularly observed to this person, that it is an acknowledged matter of fact, which is indeed implied in the foregoing observation, that there was such a nation as the Jews, of the greatest antiquity, whose government and general polity was founded on the law, here related to be given them by Moses as from heaven : that natural religion, though with rites additional, yet no way contrary to it, was their established religion, which cannot be said of the Gentile world ; and that their very being, as a nation, depended upon their acknowledgment of one God, the God of the universe. For suppose, in their captivity in Babylon, they had gone over to the religion of their conquerors, there would have remained no bond of union to keep them a distinct people. And whilst they were under their own kings, in their own country, a total apostacy from God would have been the dissolution of their whole government. They in such a sense nationally acknowledged and worshipped the Maker of heaven and earth, when the rest of the world were sunk in idolatry, as rendered them, in fact, the peculiar people of God. And this so remarkable an establishment and preservation of natural religion amongst them, seems to add some peculiar credibility to the historical evidence for the miracles of Moses and the prophets ; because these miracles are a full satisfactory account of this event, which plainly wants to be accounted for, and cannot otherwise.

Let this person, supposed wholly ignorant of history, be acquainted farther, that one claiming to be the Messiah, of Jewish extraction, rose up at the time when this nation, from the prophecies above mentioned, expected the Messiah ; that he was rejected, as it seemed to have been foretold he should, by the body of the people, under the direction of their rulers : that in the course of a very few years he was believed on, and acknowledged as the promised Messiah, by great numbers among the Gentiles, agreeably to the prophecies of Scripture, yet not upon the evidence of prophecy, but of miracles, (page 401, &c.) of which miracles we also have strong historical evidence ; (by which I mean here no more than must be acknowledged by unbelievers ; for let pious frauds and follies be admitted to weaken, it is absurd to say they destroy our evidence of miracles wrought in proof of Christianity :) (page 406, &c.) that this religion approving itself to the reason of mankind, and carrying its own evidence with it, so far as reason is a

judge of its system, and being no way contrary to reason in those parts of it which require to be believed upon the mere authority of its Author; that this religion, I say, gradually spread and supported itself, for some hundred years, not only without any assistance from temporal power, but under constant discouragements, and often the bitterest persecutions from it, and then became the religion of the world; that, in the mean time, the Jewish nation and government were destroyed in a very remarkable manner, and the people carried away captive and dispersed through the most distant countries; in which state of dispersion they have remained fifteen hundred years; and that they remain a numerous people, united amongst themselves, and distinguished from the rest of the world, as they were in the days of Moses, by the profession of his law; and every where looked upon in a manner which one scarce knows how distinctly to express, but in the words of the prophetic account of it, given so many ages before it came to pass, "Thou shalt become an astonishment, a proverb, and a by-word, among all nations whither the Lord shall lead thee." Deut. xxviii. 37.

The appearance of a standing miracle, in the Jews remaining a distinct people in their dispersion, and the confirmation which this event appears to give to the truth of revelation, may be thought to be answered, by their religion forbidding them intermarriages with those of any other, and prescribing them a great many peculiarities in their food, by which they are debarred from the means of incorporating with the people in whose countries they live. This is not, I think, a satisfactory account of that which it pretends to account for. But what does it pretend to account for? The correspondence between this event and the prophecies, or the coincidence of both with a long dispensation of Providence, of a peculiar nature, towards that people formerly? No. It is only the event itself which is offered to be thus accounted for; which single event taken alone, abstracted from all such correspondence and coincidence, perhaps would not have appeared miraculous; but that correspondence and coincidence may be so, though the event itself be supposed not. Thus the concurrence of our Saviour's being born at Bethlehem, with a long foregoing series of prophecy and other coincidences, is doubtless miraculous, the series of prophecy, and other coincidences, and the event, being admitted; though the event itself, his birth at that place, appears to have been brought about in a natural way; of which, however, no one can be certain.

And as several of these events seem, in some degree expressly, to have verified the prophetic history already ; so likewise they may be considered farther as having a peculiar aspect towards the full completion of it ; as affording some presumption that the whole of it shall, one time or other, be fulfilled. Thus, that the Jews have been so wonderfully preserved in their long and wide dispersion ; which is indeed the direct fulfilling of some prophecies, but is now mentioned only as looking forward to somewhat yet to come : that natural religion came forth from Judea, and spread in the degree it has done over the world, before lost in idolatry ; which, together with some other things, have distinguished that very place, in like manner as the people of it are distinguished : that this great change of religion over the earth, was brought about under the profession and acknowledgment that Jesus was the promised Messiah : things of this kind naturally turn the thoughts of serious men towards the full completion of the prophetic history, concerning the final restoration of that people ; concerning the establishment of the everlasting kingdom among them, the kingdom of the Messiah, and the future state of the world under this sacred government. Such circumstances and events compared with these prophecies, though no completions of them, yet would not, I think, be spoken of as nothing in the argument, by a person upon his first being informed of them. They fall in with the prophetic history of things still future, give it some additional credibility, have the appearance of being somewhat in order to the full completion of it.

Indeed it requires a good degree of knowledge, and great calmness and consideration, to be able to judge, thoroughly, of the evidence for the truth of Christianity, from that part of the prophetic history which relates to the situation of the kingdoms of the world, and to the state of the church, from the establishment of Christianity to the present time. But it appears, from a general view of it, to be very material. And those persons who have thoroughly examined it, and some of them were men of the coolest tempers, greatest capacities, and least liable to imputations of prejudice, insist upon it as determinately conclusive.

Suppose now a person quite ignorant of history, first to recollect the passages above mentioned out of Scripture, without knowing but that the whole was a late fiction, then to be informed of the correspondent facts now mentioned, and to unite them all into one view : that the profession and establishment of natural religion in the world, is greatly owing, in different ways

#### PARTICULAR EVIDENCE

book, and the supposed revelation which it contains; is acknowledged to be of the earliest antiquity; that its history and common history are entirely credible; that this nation, the Jews, of whom it chiefly treats, appear to be, in fact, the people of God, in a distinguished sense; that there was a national expectation amongst them, raised by the prophecies, of a Messiah to appear at such a time, as at this time appeared claiming to be that Messiah; that he was rejected by this nation; but received by the Gentiles, not on the evidence of prophecy, but of miracles; that the religion he taught supported itself under the greatest difficulties, on a low ground, and at length became the religion of the world; that in the mean time the Jewish polity was utterly destroyed, the nation dispersed over the face of the earth; that notwithstanding this, they have remained a distinct numerous nation for so many centuries, even to this day; which not only seems to be the express completion of several prophecies concerning them; but also renders it, as one may speak, a visible possibility, that the promises made to them as a nation may yet be fulfilled. And to these acknowledged truths, if any person we have been supposing add, as I think he ought, that every one will allow it or no, the obvious appearances which are, of the state of the world, in other respects be-



are several others of the like sort ; that all this together, which being fact, must be acknowledged by unbelievers, amounts to real evidence of somewhat more than human in this matter : evidence much more important, than careless men, who have been accustomed only to transient and partial views of it, can imagine ; and indeed abundantly sufficient to act upon. And these things, I apprehend, must be acknowledged by unbelievers. For though they may say, that the historical evidence of miracles, wrought in attestation of Christianity, is not sufficient to convince them that such miracles were really wrought ; they cannot deny, that there is such historical evidence, it being a known matter of fact that there is. They may say, the conformity between the prophecies and events, is by accident ; but there are many instances in which such conformity itself cannot be denied. They may say, with regard to such kind of collateral things as those above mentioned, that any odd accidental events, without meaning, will have a meaning found in them by fanciful people ; and that such as are fanciful in any one certain way, will make out a thousand coincidences, which seem to favour their peculiar follies. Men, I say, may talk thus ; but no one who is serious, can possibly think these things to be nothing, if he considers the importance of collateral things, and even of lesser circumstances, in the evidence of probability, as distinguished, in nature, from the evidence of demonstration. In many cases, indeed, it seems to require the truest judgment, to determine with exactness the weight of circumstantial evidence : but it is very often altogether as convincing, as that which is the most express and direct.

This general view of the evidence for Christianity, considered as making one argument, may also serve to recommend to serious persons, to set down every thing which they think may be of any real weight at all in proof of it, and particularly the many seeming completions of prophecy ; and they will find, that, judging by the natural rules, by which we judge of probable evidence in common matters, they amount to a much higher degree of proof, upon such a joint review, than could be supposed upon considering them separately, at different times ; how strong soever the proof might before appear to them, upon such separate views of it. For probable proofs, by being added, not only increase the evidence, but multiply it. Nor should I dissuade any one from setting down, what he thought made for the contrary side. But then it is to be remembered, not in order to influence his judgment, but his practice, that a mistake on one side, may be, in its consequences, much more dangerous than a mistake on the other. And what course is most

safe, and what most dangerous, is a consideration thought very material, when we deliberate, not concerning events, but concerning conduct in our temporal affairs. To be influenced by this consideration in our judgment, to believe or disbelieve upon it, is indeed as much prejudice, as any thing whatever. And, like other prejudices, it operates contrary ways in different men. For some are inclined to believe what they hope ; and others, what they fear. And it is manifest unreasonableness, to apply to men's passions in order to gain their assent. But in deliberations concerning conduct, there is nothing which reason more requires to be taken into the account, than the importance of it. For, suppose it doubtful, what would be the consequence of acting in this, or in a contrary manner ; still, that taking one side could be attended with little or no bad consequence, and taking the other might be attended with the greatest, must appear, to unprejudiced reason, of the highest moment towards determining how we are to act. But the truth of our religion, like the truth of common matters, is to be judged of by all the evidence taken together. And unless the whole series of things which may be alleged in this argument, and every particular thing in it, can reasonably be supposed to have been by accident, (for here the stress of the argument for Christianity lies), then is the truth of it proved : in like manner as if, in any common case, numerous events acknowledged, were to be alleged in proof of any other event disputed ; the truth of the disputed event would be proved, not only if any one of the acknowledged ones did of itself clearly imply it, but, though no one of them singly did so, if the whole of the acknowledged events taken together, could not in reason be supposed to have happened, unless the disputed one were true.

It is obvious, how much advantage the nature of this evidence gives to those persons who attack Christianity, especially in conversation. For it is easy to shew, in a short and lively manner, that such and such things are liable to objection, that this and another thing is of little weight in itself ; but impossible to shew, in like manner, the united force of the whole argument in one view.

However, lastly, as it has been made appear, that there is no presumption against a revelation as miraculous ; that the general scheme of Christianity, and the principal parts of it, are conformable to the experienced constitution of things, and the whole perfectly credible ; so the account now given of the positive evidence for it, shews, that this evidence is such, as, from the nature of it, cannot be destroyed, though it should be lessened.

## CHAP. VIII.

THE OBJECTIONS WHICH MAY BE MADE AGAINST ARGUING  
FROM THE ANALOGY OF NATURE TO RELIGION.

every one would consider, with such attention as they are and, even in point of morality, to consider what they judge I give characters of, the occasion of this chapter would be, some good measure at least, superseded. But since this not to be expected; for some we find do not concern themselves to understand even what they write against: since this mistake, in common with most others, lies open to objections, which may appear very material to thoughtful men at first sight; and, besides that, seems peculiarly liable to the objections of such as can judge without thinking, and of such as can assure without judging; it may not be amiss to set down the effect of these objections which occur to me, and consider them on their hands. And they are such as these:—

“That it is a poor thing to solve difficulties in revelation, saying, that there are the same in natural religion; when what is wanting is to clear both of them, of these their common, as well as other their respective, difficulties; but that it is a strange way indeed of convincing men of the obligations of religion, to shew them, that they have as little reason for their worldly pursuits; and a strange way of vindicating the justice and goodness of the Author of nature, and of removing the objections against both, to which the system of religion lies open, to shew, that the like objections lie against natural providence; or any way of answering objections against religion, without so much pretending to make out, that the system of it, or the particular things in it objected against, are reasonable—especially, perhaps some may be inattentive enough to add, must this be thought strange, when it is confessed that analogy is no answer to such objections: that when this sort of reasoning is carried to the utmost length it can be imagined capable of, it will yet leave the mind in a very unsatisfied state; and that it must be an unaccountable ignorance of mankind, to imagine they will be prevailed with to forego their present interests and pleasures, in regard to religion, upon doubtful evidence.”

Now, as plausible as this way of talking may appear, that nearance will be found in a great measure owing to halves, which shew but part of an object, yet shew that indis-

tinctly, and to undeterminate language. By these means weak men are often deceived by others, and ludicrous men by themselves. And even those who are serious and considerate, cannot always readily disentangle, and at once clearly see through the perplexities, in which subjects themselves are involved; and which are heightened by the deficiencies and the abuse of words. To this latter sort of persons, the following reply to each part of this objection severally, may be of some assistance, as it may also tend a little to stop and silence others.

*First*, The thing wanted, *i. e.* what men require, is to have all difficulties cleared. And this is, or, at least for any thing we know to the contrary, it may be, the same, as requiring to comprehend the divine nature, and the whole plan of Providence from everlasting to everlasting. But it hath always been allowed to argue, from what is acknowledged to what is disputed. And it is in no other sense a poor thing, to argue from natural religion to revealed, in the manner found fault with, than it is to argue in numberless other ways of probable deduction and inference, in matters of conduct, which we are continually reduced to the necessity of doing. Indeed, the epithet *poor* may be applied, I fear, as properly to great part, or the whole, of human life, as it is to the things mentioned in the objection. Is it not a poor thing, for a physician to have so little knowledge in the cure of diseases, as even the most eminent have? To act upon conjecture and guess, where the life of man is concerned? Undoubtedly it is: but not in comparison of having no skill at all in that useful art, and being obliged to act wholly in the dark.

Further: Since it is as unreasonable as it is common, to urge objections against revelation, which are of equal weight against natural religion; and those who do this, if they are not confused themselves, deal unfairly with others, in making it seem that they are arguing only against revelation, or particular doctrines of it, when in reality they are arguing against moral providence; it is a thing of consequence to shew, that such objections are as much levelled against natural religion, as against revealed. And objections, which are equally applicable to both, are, properly speaking, answered by its being shewn that they are so, provided the former be admitted to be true. And without taking in the consideration how distinctly this is admitted, it is plainly very material to observe, that as the things objected against in natural religion, are of the same kind with what is certain matter of experience, in the course of providence, and

in the information which God affords us concerning our temporal interest under his government : so the objections against the system of Christianity and the evidence of it, are of the very same kind with those which are made against the system and evidence of natural religion. However, the reader upon review may see, that most of the analogies insisted upon, even in the latter part of this Treatise, do not necessarily require to have more taken for granted than is in the former ; that there is an Author of nature, or natural Governor of the world ; and Christianity is vindicated, not from its analogy to natural religion, but chiefly from its analogy to the experienced constitution of nature.

*Secondly*, Religion is a practical thing, and consists in such a determinate course of life ; as being what, there is reason to think, is commanded by the Author of nature, and will, upon the whole, be our happiness under his government. Now, if men can be convinced that they have the like reason to believe this, as to believe, that taking care of their temporal affairs will be to their advantage ; such conviction cannot but be an argument to them for the practice of religion. And if there be really any reason for believing one of these, and endeavouring to preserve life, and secure ourselves the necessaries and conveniences of it ; then there is reason also for believing the other, and endeavouring to secure the interest it proposes to us. And if the interest which religion proposes to us be infinitely greater than our whole temporal interest ; then there must be proportionably greater reason for endeavouring to secure one than the other : since, by the supposition, the probability of our securing one, is equal to the probability of our securing the other. This seems plainly unanswerable ; and has a tendency to influence fair minds, who consider what our condition really is, or upon what evidence we are naturally appointed to act ; and who are disposed to acquiesce in the terms upon which we live, and attend to and follow that practical instruction, whatever it be, which is afforded us.

But the chief and proper force of the argument referred to in the objection, lies in another place. For it is said that the proof of religion is involved in such inextricable difficulties, as to render it doubtful ; and that it cannot be supposed, that if it were true it would be left upon doubtful evidence. Here then, over and above the force of each particular difficulty or objection, these difficulties and objections taken together, are turned into a positive argument against the truth of religion : which argument would stand thus. If religion were true, it

would not be left doubtful, and open to objections to the degree in which it is : therefore that it is thus left, not only renders the evidence of it weak, and lessens its force, in proportion to the weight of such objections ; but it also shews it to be false, or is a general presumption of its being so. Now the observation, that from the natural constitution and course of things, we must in our temporal concerns, almost continually, and in matters of great consequence, act upon evidence of a like kind and degree to the evidence of religion ; is an answer to this argument : because it shews that it is according to the conduct and character of the author of nature to appoint we should act upon evidence like to that, which this argument presumes he cannot be supposed to appoint we should act upon : it is an instance, a general one made up of numerous particular ones, of somewhat in his dealing with us, similar to what is said to be incredible. And as the force of this answer lies merely in the parallel which there is between the evidence for religion and for our temporal conduct ; the answer is equally just and conclusive, whether the parallel be made out, by shewing the evidence of the former to be higher, or the evidence of the latter to be lower.

*Thirdly*, The design of this treatise is not to vindicate the character of God, but to shew the obligations of men ; it is not to justify his providence, but to shew what belongs to us to do. These are two subjects, and ought not to be confounded. And though they may at length run up into each other, yet observations may immediately tend to make out the latter, which do not appear, by any immediate connexion, to the purpose of the former ; which is less our concern than many seem to think. For, 1st, It is not necessary we should justify the dispensations of Providence against objections, any farther than to shew, that the things objected against may, for ought we know, be consistent with justice and goodness. Suppose, then, that there are things in the system of this world, and plan of Providence relating to it, which taken alone would be unjust ; yet it has been shewn unanswerably, that if we could take in the reference which these things may have, to other things present, past, and to come ; to the whole scheme, which the things objected against are parts of ; these very things might, for ought we know, be found to be, not only consistent with justice, but instances of it. Indeed, it has been shewn, by the analogy of what we see, not only possible that this may be the case, but credible that it is. And thus objections, drawn from such things, are answered, and Providence is vindicated, as far as religion makes its vindication necessary. Hence it appears,

*2dly*, That objections against the divine justice and goodness are not endeavoured to be removed, by shewing that the like objections, allowed to be really conclusive, lie against natural providence : but those objections being supposed and shewn not to be conclusive, the things objected against, considered as matters of fact, are farther shewn to be credible, from their conformity to the constitution of nature ; for instance, that God will reward and punish men for their actions hereafter, from the observation, that he does reward and punish them for their actions here. And this, I apprehend, is of weight. And I add, *3dly*, It would be of weight, even though those objections were not answered. For, there being the proof of religion above set down, and religion implying several facts ; for instance again, the fact last mentioned, that God will reward and punish men for their actions hereafter ; the observation that his present method of government is by rewards and punishments, shews that future fact not to be incredible ; whatever objections men may think they have against it, as unjust or unmerciful, according to their notions of justice and mercy ; or as improbable from their belief of necessity. I say, *as improbable* ; for it is evident no objection against it, *as unjust*, can be urged from necessity ; since this notion as much destroys injustice, as it does justice. Then, *4thly*, Though objections against the reasonableness of the system of religion, cannot indeed be answered without entering into consideration of its reasonableness, yet objections against the credibility or truth of it may. Because the system of it is reducible into what is properly matter of fact ; and the truth, the probable truth, of facts, may be shewn without consideration of their reasonableness. Nor is it necessary, though in some cases and respects, it is highly useful and proper, yet it is not necessary, to give a proof of the reasonableness of every precept enjoined us, and of every particular dispensation of Providence which comes into the system of religion. Indeed, the more thoroughly a person of a right disposition is convinced of the perfection of the divine nature and conduct, the farther he will advance towards that perfection of religion, which St. John (1 John iv. 18) speaks of. But the general obligations of religion are fully made out, by proving the reasonableness of the practice of it. And that the practice of religion is reasonable, may be shewn, though no more could be proved, than that the system of it *may be* so, for ought we know to the contrary ; and even without entering into the distinct consideration of this. And from hence, *5thly*, It is easy to see, that though the analogy of nature is not an immediate answer



to objections against the wisdom, the justice, or goodness, of any doctrine or precept of religion ; yet it may be, as it is, an immediate and direct answer to what is really intended by such objections ; which is, to shew that the things objected against are incredible.

*Fourthly,* It is most readily acknowledged, that the foregoing Treatise is by no means satisfactory ; very far indeed from it : but so would any natural institution of life appear, if reduced into a system, together with its evidence. Leaving religion out of the case, men are divided in their opinions, whether our pleasures overbalance our pains ; and whether it be, or be not, eligible to live in this world. And were all such controversies settled, which perhaps, in speculation, would be found involved in great difficulties ; and were it determined, upon the evidence of reason, as nature has determined it to our hands, that life is to be preserved ; yet still, the rules which God has been pleased to afford us, for escaping the miseries of it, and obtaining its satisfactions, the rules, for instance, of preserving health and recovering it when lost, are not only fallible and precarious, but very far from being exact. Nor are we informed by nature, in future contingencies and accidents, so as to render it at all certain, what is the best method of managing our affairs. What will be the success of our temporal pursuits, in the common sense of the word *success*, is highly doubtful. And what will be the success of them, in the proper sense of the word, *i. e.* what happiness or enjoyment we shall obtain by them, is doubtful in a much higher degree. Indeed, the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence, with which we are obliged to take up, in the daily course of life, is scarce to be expressed. Yet men do not throw away life, or disregard the interests of it, upon account of this doubtfulness. The evidence of religion then being admitted real, those who object against it, as not satisfactory, *i. e.* as not being what they wish it, plainly forget the very condition of our being ; for satisfaction, in this sense, does not belong to such a creature as man. And, which is more material, they forget also the very nature of religion. For, religion presupposes, in all those who will embrace it, a certain degree of integrity and honesty ; which it was intended to try whether men have or not, and to exercise in such as have it, in order to its improvement. Religion presupposes this as much, and in the same sense, as speaking to a man presupposes he understands the language in which you speak ; or as warning a man of any danger, presupposes that he hath such a regard to himself, as that he will endeavour to avoid it. And

therefore the question is not at all, Whether the evidence of religion be satisfactory ; but, Whether it be, in reason, sufficient to prove and discipline that virtue which it presupposes ? Now the evidence of it is fully sufficient for all those purposes of probation ; how far soever it is from being satisfactory, as to the purposes of curiosity, or any other : and indeed it answers the purposes of the former in several respects, which it would not do, if it were as overbearing as is required. One might add farther, that whether the motives, or the evidence for any course of action, be satisfactory, meaning here by that word, what satisfies a man that such a course of action will in event be for his good ; this need never be, and I think, strictly speaking, never is, the practical question in common matters. But the practical question in all cases, is, Whether the evidence for a course of action be such, as, taking in all circumstances, makes the faculty within us, which is the guide and judge of conduct,\* determine that course of action to be prudent ? Indeed, satisfaction that it will be for our interest or happiness, abundantly determines an action to be prudent ; but evidence, almost infinitely lower than this, determines actions to be so too, even in the conduct of every day.

*Fifthly,* As to the objection concerning the influence which this argument, or any part of it, may, or may not, be expected to have upon men, I observe, as above, that religion being intended for a trial and exercise of the morality of every person's character, who is a subject of it ; and there being, as I have shewn, such evidence for it, as is sufficient, in reason, to influence men to embrace it : to object, that it is not to be imagined mankind will be influenced by such evidence, is nothing to the purpose of the foregoing Treatise. For the purpose of it is not to inquire, What sort of creatures mankind are ; but, What the light and knowledge, which is afforded them, requires they should be ? to shew how, in reason, they ought to behave ; not how, in fact, they will behave. This depends upon themselves, and is their own concern ; the personal concern of each man in particular. And how little regard the generality have to it, experience, indeed, does too fully shew. But religion, considered as a probation, has had its end upon all persons, to whom it has been proposed, with evidence sufficient in reason to influence their practice ; for by this means they have been put into a state of probation ; let them behave as they will in it. And thus, not only revelation,

\* See Dissertation 2.

but reason also, teaches us, that by the evidence of religion being laid before men, the designs of Providence are carrying on, not only with regard to those who will, but likewise with regard to those who will not, be influenced by it. However, *lastly*, the objection here referred to allows the things insisted upon in this Treatise to be of some weight ; and if so, it may be hoped it will have some influence. And if there be a probability that it will have any at all, there is the same reason in kind, though not in degree, to lay it before men, as there would be, if it were likely to have a greater influence.

And farther, I desire it may be considered, with respect to the whole of the foregoing objections, that in this Treatise I have argued upon the principles of others,\* not my own ; and have omitted what I think true, and of the utmost importance, because by others thought unintelligible, or not true. Thus I have argued upon the principles of the Fatalists, which I do not believe ; and have omitted a thing of the utmost importance, which I do believe, the moral fitness and unfitness of actions, prior to all will whatever ; which I apprehend as certainly to determine the Divine conduct, as speculative truth and falsehood necessarily determine the Divine judgment. Indeed the principle of liberty, and that of moral fitness, so force themselves upon the mind, that moralists, the ancients as well as moderns, have formed their language upon it. And probably it may appear in mine, though I have endeavoured to avoid it ; and in order to avoid it, have sometimes been obliged to express myself in a manner which will appear strange to such as do not observe the reason for it ; but the general argument here pursued, does not at all suppose, or proceed upon these principles. Now, these two abstract principles of liberty and moral fitness being omitted, religion can be considered in no other view than merely as a question of fact ; and in this view it is here considered. It is obvious, that Christianity, and the proof of it, are both historical. And even natural religion is, properly, a matter of fact. For, that there is a righteous Governor of the world, is so ; and this proposition contains the general system of natural religion. But then, several abstract truths, and in particular those two principles, are usually taken into consideration in the proof of it ; whereas it is here treated of only as a matter of fact. To ex-

\* By *arguing upon the principles of others*, the reader will observe is meant, not proving any thing *from* those principles, but *notwithstanding* them. Thus religion is proved, not *from* the opinion of necessity, which is absurd, but *notwithstanding*, or *even though*, that opinion were admitted to be true.

plain this : that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones, is an abstract truth ; but that they appear so to our mind, is only a matter of fact. And this last must have been admitted, if any thing was, by those ancient sceptics, who would not have admitted the former ; but pretended to doubt, Whether there were any such thing as truth ; or, Whether we could certainly depend upon our faculties of understanding for the knowledge of it in any case. So likewise, that there is, in the nature of things, an original standard of right and wrong in actions, independent upon all will, but which unalterably determines the will of God to exercise that moral government over the world which religion teaches, *i. e.* finally and upon the whole to reward and punish men respectively as they act right or wrong ; this assertion contains an abstract truth, as well as matter of fact. But suppose in the present state, every man, without exception, was rewarded and punished, in exact proportion as he followed or transgressed that sense of right and wrong, which God has implanted in the nature of every man ; this would not be at all an abstract truth, but only a matter of fact. And though this fact were acknowledged by every one, yet the very same difficulties might be raised, as are now, concerning the abstract questions of liberty and moral fitness : and we should have a proof, even the certain one of experience, that the government of the world was perfectly moral, without taking in the consideration of those questions : and this proof would remain, in what way soever they were determined. And thus, God having given mankind a moral faculty, the object of which is actions, and which naturally approves some actions as right and of good desert ; and condemns others as wrong, and of ill desert ; that he will, finally and upon the whole, reward the former and punish the latter, is not an assertion of an abstract truth, but of what is as mere a fact, as his doing so at present would be. This future fact I have not indeed proved with the force with which it might be proved, from the principles of liberty and moral fitness ; but without them have given a really conclusive practical proof of it, which is greatly strengthened by the general analogy of nature ; a proof easily cavilled at, easily shown not to be demonstrative, for it is not offered as such ; but impossible, I think, to be evaded or answered. And thus the obligations of religion are made out, exclusively of the questions concerning liberty and moral fitness ; which have been perplexed with difficulties and abstruse reasonings, as every thing may.

Hence, therefore, may be observed distinctly, what is the

#### OBJECTIONS TO ANALOGY OF NATURE TO RELIGION.

this Treatise. It will be, to such as are convinced of  
upon the proof arising out of the two last mentioned  
s, an additional proof and a confirmation of it : to such  
not admit those principles, an original proof of it,  
(12, &c.) and a confirmation of that proof. Those  
eve, will here find the scheme of Christianity cleared  
tions, and the evidence of it in a peculiar manner  
ened : those who do not believe, will at least be  
the absurdity of all attempts to prove Christianity  
e plain undoubted credibility of it, and, I hope, a  
l more.

thus, though some perhaps may seriously think, that  
as here urged, has too great stress laid upon it ; and  
unanswerable ridicule, may be applied, to show the  
t from it in a disadvantageous light ; yet there can be  
ion, but that it is a real one. For religion, both na-  
l revealed, implying in it numerous facts ; analogy,  
confirmation of all facts to which it can be applied, as  
only proof of most, cannot but be admitted by every  
e a material thing, and truly of weight on the side of  
both natural and revealed ; and it ought to be parti-  
regarded by such as profess to follow nature, and to be  
fied with abstract reasonings.

## CONCLUSION.

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**WHATEVER** account may be given, of the strange inattention and disregard, in some ages and countries, to a matter of such importance as religion, it would, before experience, be incredible, that there should be the like disregard in those, who have had the moral system of the world laid before them, as it is by Christianity, and often inculcated upon them ; because this moral system carries in it a good degree of evidence for its truth, upon its being barely proposed to our thoughts. There is no need of abstruse reasonings and distinctions, to convince an unprejudiced understanding, that there is a God who made and governs the world, and will judge it in righteousness ; though they may be necessary to answer abstruse difficulties, when once such are raised ; when the very meaning of those words, which express most intelligibly the general doctrine of religion, is pretended to be uncertain, and the clear truth of the thing itself is obscured by the intricacies of speculation. But, to an unprejudiced mind, ten thousand thousand instances of design, cannot but prove a Designer. And it is intuitively manifest, that creatures ought to live under a dutiful sense of their Maker ; and that justice and charity must be his laws, to creatures whom he has made social, and placed in society. Indeed, the truth of revealed religion, peculiarly so called, is not self-evident, but requires external proof, in order to its being received. Yet inattention, among us, to revealed religion, will be found to imply the same dissolute immoral temper of mind, as inattention to natural religion ; because, when both are laid before us, in the manner they are in Christian countries of liberty, our obligations to inquire into both, and to embrace both upon supposition of their truth, are obligations of the same na-

ture. For, revelation claims to be the voice of God ; and our obligation to attend to his voice, is, surely, moral in all cases. And as it is insisted, that its evidence is conclusive, upon thorough consideration of it ; so it offers itself to us with manifest obvious appearances of having something more than human in it, and therefore in all reason requires, to have its claims most seriously examined into. It is to be added, that though light and knowledge, in what manner soever afforded us, is equally from God ; yet a miraculous revelation has a peculiar tendency, from the first principles of our nature, to awaken mankind, and inspire them with reverence and awe : and this is a peculiar obligation, to attend to what claims to be so with such appearances of truth. It is therefore most certain, that our obligations to inquire seriously into the evidence of Christianity, and, upon supposition of its truth, to embrace it, are of the utmost importance, and moral in the highest and most proper sense. Let us then suppose, that the evidence of religion in general, and of Christianity, has been seriously inquired into, by all reasonable men among us. Yet we find many professedly to reject both, upon speculative principles of infidelity. And all of them do not content themselves with a bare neglect of religion, and enjoying their imaginary freedom from its restraints. Some go much beyond this. They deride God's moral government over the world : They renounce his protection, and defy his justice : They ridicule and vilify Christianity, and blaspheme the Author of it ; and take all occasions to manifest a scorn and contempt of revelation. This amounts to an active setting themselves against religion ; to what may be considered as a positive principle of irreligion ; which they cultivate within themselves, and, whether they intend this effect or not, render habitual, as a good man does the contrary principle. And others, who are not chargeable with all this profligateness, yet are in avowed opposition to religion, as if discovered to be groundless. Now admitting, which is the supposition we go upon, that these persons act upon what they think principles of reason, and otherwise they are not to be argued with ; it is really inconceivable, that they should imagine they clearly see the whole evidence of it, considered in itself to be nothing at all ; nor do they pretend this. They are far indeed from having a just notion of its evidence ; but they would not say its evidence was nothing, if they thought the system of it, with all its circumstances, were credible, like other matters of science or history. So that their manner of treating it must proceed, either from such kind of objections against all religion,



as have been answered or obviated in the former part of this Treatise ; or else from objections and difficulties, supposed more peculiar to Christianity. Thus, they entertain prejudices against the whole notion of a revelation, and miraculous interpositions. They find things in Scripture, whether in incidental passages or in the general scheme of it, which appear to them unreasonable. They take for granted, that if Christianity were true, the light of it must have been more general, and the evidence of it more satisfactory, or rather overbearing ; that it must and would have been, in some way, otherwise put and left, than it is. Now, this is not imagining they see the evidence itself to be nothing, or inconsiderable ; but quite another thing. It is being fortified against the evidence, in some degree acknowledged, by thinking they see the system of Christianity, or somewhat which appears to them necessarily connected with it, to be incredible or false ; fortified against that evidence, which might, otherwise, make great impression upon them. Or, lastly, if any of these persons are, upon the whole, in doubt concerning the truth of Christianity ; their behaviour seems owing to their taking for granted, through strange inattention, that such doubting is, in a manner, the same thing as being certain against it.

To these persons, and to this state of opinion concerning religion, the foregoing Treatise is adapted. For, all the general objections against the moral system of nature having been obviated, it is shown, that there is not any peculiar presumption at all against Christianity, either considered as not discoverable by reason, or as unlike to what is so discovered ; nor any worth mentioning, against it as miraculous, if any at all ; none certainly, which can render it in the least incredible. It is shown, that upon supposition of a divine revelation, the analogy of nature renders it beforehand highly credible, I think probable, that many things in it must appear liable to great objections ; and that we must be incompetent judges of it, to a great degree. This observation is, I think, unquestionably true, and of the very utmost importance : but it is urged, as I hope it will be understood, with great caution of not vilifying the faculty of reason, which is “ the candle of the Lord within us ;”<sup>\*</sup> though it can afford no light, where it does not shine ; nor judge, where it has no principles to judge upon. The objections here spoken of, being first answered in the view of objections against Christianity as a matter of fact, are in the next

<sup>\*</sup> Prov. xx. 27.

place considered as urged, more immediately, against the wisdom, justice and goodness of the Christian dispensation. And it is fully made out, that they admit of exactly the like answer, in every respect, to what the like objections against the constitution of nature admit of: that, as partial views give the appearance of wrong to things, which, upon farther consideration and knowledge of their relations to other things, are found just and good; so it is perfectly credible, that the things objected against the wisdom and goodness of the Christian dispensation, may be rendered instances of wisdom and goodness by their reference to other things beyond our view: because Christianity is a scheme as much above our comprehension, as that of nature; and, like that, a scheme in which means are made use of to accomplish ends, and which, as is most credible, may be carried on by general laws. And it ought to be attended to, that this is not an answer taken merely or chiefly from our ignorance; but from somewhat positive, which our observation shews us. For, to like objections, the like answer is experienced to be just, in numberless parallel cases. The objections against the Christian dispensation, and the method by which it is carried on, having been thus obviated, in general and together; the chief of them are considered distinctly, and the particular things objected to are shewn credible, by their perfect analogy, each apart, to the constitution of nature. Thus, if man be fallen from his primitive state, and to be restored, and infinite wisdom and power engages in accomplishing our recovery; it were to have been expected, it is said, that this should have been effected at once, and not by such a long series of means; and such a various economy of persons and things; one dispensation preparatory to another, this to a farther one, and so on through an indefinite number of ages, before the end of the scheme proposed can be completely accomplished; a scheme conducted by infinite wisdom, and executed by almighty power. But now, on the contrary, our finding that every thing in the constitution and course of nature is thus carried on, shews such expectations concerning revelation to be highly unreasonable; and is a satisfactory answer to them, when urged as objections against the credibility, that the great scheme of Providence in the redemption of the world may be of this kind, and to be accomplished in this manner. As to the particular method of our redemption, the appointment of a Mediator between God and man; this has been shown to be most obviously analogous to the general conduct of nature, *i. e.* the God of nature, in appointing others to be the instruments of his mercy, as we experience in

the daily course of Providence. The condition of this world, which the doctrine of our redemption by Christ presupposes, so much falls in with natural appearances, that heathen moralists inferred it from those appearances; inferred, that human nature was fallen from its original rectitude, and, in consequence of this, degraded from its primitive happiness. Or, however this opinion came into the world, these appearances must have kept up the tradition, and confirmed the belief of it. And as it was the general opinion, under the light of nature, that repentance and reformation, alone and by itself, was not sufficient to do away sin, and procure a full remission of the penalties annexed to it; and as the reason of the thing does not at all lead to any such conclusion; so every day's experience shews us, that reformation is not, in any sort, sufficient to prevent the present disadvantages and miseries, which, in the natural course of things, God has annexed to folly and extravagance. Yet there may be ground to think, that the punishments, which, by the general laws of divine government, are annexed to vice, may be prevented; that provision may have been, even originally, made, that they should be prevented by some means or other, though they could not by reformation alone. For we have daily instances of such mercy in the general conduct of nature; compassion provided for misery,\* medicines for diseases, friends against enemies. There is provision made, in the original constitution of the world, that much of the natural bad consequences of our follies, which persons themselves alone cannot prevent, may be prevented by the assistance of others; assistance which nature enables and disposes, and appoints them to afford. By a method of goodness analogous to this, when the world lay in wickedness, and consequently in ruin, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" to save it; and "he being made perfect by suffering, became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him."† Indeed neither reason nor analogy would lead us to think, in particular, that the interposition of Christ, in the manner in which he did interpose, would be of that efficacy for recovery of the world, which the Scripture teaches us it was: but neither would reason nor analogy lead us to think that other particular means would be of the efficacy which experience shews they are in numberless instances. And therefore, as the case before us does not admit of experience; so that neither reason nor analogy can shew how, or in what particular

\* Sermon at the Rolls, p. 106.

† John iii. 16. Heb. v. 9.

way, the interposition of Christ, as revealed in Scripture, is of that efficacy which it is there represented to be ; this is no kind nor degree of presumption against its being really of that efficacy. Farther : the objections against Christianity, from the light of it not being universal, nor its evidence so strong as might possibly be given us, have been answered by the general analogy of nature. That God has made such variety of creatures, is indeed an answer to the former ; but that he dispenses his gifts in such variety, both of degrees and kinds, amongst creatures of the same species, and even to the same individuals at different times, is a more obvious and full answer to it. And it is so far from being the method of Providence, in other cases, to afford us such overbearing evidence, as some require in proof of Christianity, that, on the contrary, the evidence upon which we are naturally appointed to act in common matters, throughout a very great part of life, is doubtful in a high degree. And, admitting the fact, that God has afforded to some no more than doubtful evidence of religion, the same account may be given of it as of difficulties and temptations with regard to practice. But as it is not impossible,\* surely, that this alleged doubtfulness may be men's own fault, it deserves their most serious consideration whether it be not so. However, it is certain that doubting implies a degree of evidence for that of which we doubt ; and that this degree of evidence as really lays us under obligations as demonstrative evidence.

The whole, then, of religion is throughout credible ; nor is there, I think, any thing relating to the revealed dispensation of things more different from the experienced constitution and course of nature, than some parts of the constitution of nature are from other parts of it. And if so, the only question which remains is, What positive evidence can be alleged for the truth of Christianity ? This too, in general, has been considered, and the objections against it estimated. Deduct, therefore, what is to be deducted from that evidence, upon account of any weight which may be thought to remain in these objections, after what the analogy of nature has suggested in answer to them ; and then consider what are the practical consequences from all this, upon the most sceptical principles one can argue upon, (for I am writing to persons who entertain these principles :) and, upon such consideration it will be obvious, that immorality, as little excuse as it admits of in itself, is greatly aggravated in persons who have been made acquainted with

Christianity, whether they believe it or not ; because the moral system of nature, or natural religion, which Christianity lays before us, approves itself, almost intuitively, to a reasonable mind upon seeing it proposed. In the next place, with regard to Christianity, it will be observed, that there is a middle between a full satisfaction of the truth of it, and a satisfaction of the contrary. The middle state of mind between these two consists in a serious apprehension that it may be true, joined with doubt, whether it be so. And this, upon the best judgment I am able to make, is as far towards speculative infidelity, as any sceptic can at all be supposed to go who has had true Christianity, with the proper evidence of it, laid before him, and has in any tolerable measure considered them. For I would not be mistaken to comprehend all who have ever heard of it ; because it seems evident, that in many countries called Christian, neither Christianity nor its evidence are fairly laid before men. And in places where both are, there appear to be some who have very little attended to either, and who reject Christianity with a scorn proportionate to their inattention ; and yet are by no means without understanding in other matters. Now it has been shewn that a serious apprehension that Christianity may be true, lays persons under the strictest obligations of a serious regard to it throughout the whole of their life ; a regard not the same exactly, but in many respects nearly the same, with what a full conviction of its truth would lay them under. *Lastly*, it will appear that blasphemy and profaneness, I mean with regard to Christianity, are absolutely without excuse. For there is no temptation to it, but from the wantonness of vanity or mirth ; and these, considering the infinite importance of the subject, are no such temptations as to afford any excuse for it. If this be a just account of things, and yet men can go on to vilify or disregard Christianity, which is to talk and act as if they had a demonstration of its falsehood ; there is no reason to think they would alter their behaviour to any purpose, though there were a demonstration of its truth.

# DISSERTATIONS.

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## DISSERT. I.

### OF PERSONAL IDENTITY.

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**WHETHER** we are to live in a future state, as it is the most important question which can possibly be asked, so it is the most intelligible one which can be expressed in language. Yet strange perplexities have been raised about the meaning of that identity, or sameness of person, which is implied in the notion of our living now and hereafter, or in any two successive moments. And the solution of these difficulties hath been stranger than the difficulties themselves. For personal identity has been explained so by some, as to render the inquiry concerning a future life of no consequence at all to us, the persons who are making it. And though few men can be misled by such subtleties, yet it may be proper a little to consider them.

Now, when it is asked wherein personal identity consists, the answer should be the same as if it were asked, wherein consists similitude or equality ; that all attempts to define would but perplex it. Yet there is no difficulty at all in ascertaining the idea. For as, upon two triangles being compared or viewed together, there arises to the mind the idea of similitude ; or, upon twice two and four, the idea of equality ; so likewise, upon comparing the consciousness of one's self, or one's own existence in any two moments, there as immediately arises to the mind the idea of personal identity. And as the two former comparisons not only give us the ideas of similitude and equality, but also shew us that two triangles are alike, and twice two and four

are equal ; so the latter comparison not only gives us the idea of personal identity, but also shews us the identity of ourselves in those two moments ; the present, suppose, and that immediately past ; or the present, and that a month, a year, or twenty years past. Or, in other words, by reflecting upon that which is myself now, and that which was myself twenty years ago, I discern they are not two, but one and the same self.

But, though consciousness of what is past does thus ascertain our personal identity to ourselves, yet, to say that it makes personal identity, or is necessary to our being the same persons, is to say that a person has not existed a single moment, nor done one action, but what he can remember ; indeed none but what he reflects upon. And one should really think it self-evident, that consciousness of personal identity presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute, personal identity, any more than knowledge, in any other case, can constitute truth, which it presupposes.

This wonderful mistake may possibly have arisen from hence, that to be endued with consciousness, is inseparable from the idea of a person, or intelligent being. For this might be expressed inaccurately thus,—that consciousness makes personality ; and from hence it might be concluded to make personal identity. But though present consciousness of what we at present do and feel is necessary to our being the persons we now are, yet present consciousness of past actions, or feelings, is not necessary to our being the same persons who performed those actions, or had those feelings.

The inquiry, what makes vegetables the same in the common acceptance of the word, does not appear to have any relation to this of personal identity ; because the word *same*, when applied to them and to person, is not only applied to different subjects, but it is also used in different senses. For when a man swears to the same tree, as having stood fifty years in the same place, he means only the same as to all the purposes of property and uses of common life, and not that the tree has been all that time the same in the strict philosophical sense of the word. For he does not know, whether any one particle of the present tree, be the same with any one particle of the tree which stood in the same place fifty years ago. And if they have not one common particle of matter, they cannot be the same tree in the proper philosophic sense of the word *same* ; it being evidently a contradiction in terms, to say they are, when no part of their substance, and no one of their properties, is the same ; no part of their substance, by the supposition ; no one of their properties,



#### DISSERTATION I.

it is allowed, that the same property cannot be transferred from one substance to another. And therefore when we say the identity or sameness of a plant consists in a continuance of the same life, communicated under the same organization, and a number of particles of matter, whether the same or different, the word *same*, when applied to life and to organization, possibly be understood to signify what it signifies in this sense, when applied to matter. In a loose and popular manner, then, the life, and the organization, and the plant, are said to be the same, notwithstanding the perpetual change of parts. But in a strict and philosophical manner of speaking, no man, no being, no mode of being, no anything, can be the same with that with which it hath indeed nothing the same. Now, sameness is used in this latter sense when applied to persons. The identity of these, therefore, cannot subsist in the diversity of substance.

What is here considered, and demonstratively, as I think, is proposed by Mr. Locke in these words, *Whether the same self or person, be the same identical substance?* He has suggested what is a much better answer to the question than that which he gives it in form. For he defines *person* as *thinking intelligent being, &c.* and personal identity, as *consistency of a rational being.\** The question then is, whe-

but one and the same person ; and therefore is one and the same.

Mr. Locke's observations upon this subject appear hasty ; and he seems to profess himself dissatisfied with suppositions, which he has made relating to it.\* But some of those hasty observations have been carried to a strange length by others, whose notion, when traced and examined to the bottom, amounts, I think, to this :† “ That personality is not a permanent, but a transient thing : that it lives and dies, begins and ends, continually : that no one can any more remain one and the same person two moments together, than two successive moments can be one and the same moment : that our substance is indeed continually changing ; but whether this be so or not, is, it seems, nothing to the purpose, since it is not substance, but consciousness alone, which constitutes personality ; which consciousness, being successive, cannot be the same in any two moments, nor consequently the personality constituted by it.” And from hence it must follow, that it is a fallacy upon ourselves, to charge our present selves with any thing we did, or to imagine our present selves interested in any thing which befell us yesterday, or that our present self will be interested in what will befall us to-morrow ; since our present self is not, in reality, the same with the self of yesterday, but another like self or person coming in its room, and mistaken for it ; to which another self will succeed to-morrow. This, I say, must follow ; for if the self or person of to-day, and that of to-morrow, are not the same, but only like persons, the person of to-day is really no more interested in what will befall the person of to-morrow, than in what will befall any other person. It may be thought, perhaps, that this is not a just representation of the opinion we are speaking of ; because those who maintain it allow, that a person is the same as far back as his remembrance reaches. And, indeed, they do use the words *identity* and *same person*. Nor will language permit these words to be laid aside ; since if they were, there must be, I know not what, ridiculous periphrasis substituted in the room of them. But they cannot, consistently with themselves, mean that the person is really the same. For it is self-evident, that the personality cannot be really the same, if, as they expressly assert, that in which it consists is not the same. And as, consistently with themselves, they cannot, so, I think, it appears they do not, mean, that the

\* Locke, p. 152.

† See an answer to Dr. Clarke's Third Defence of his Letter to Mr. Dodwell, 2d edit. pp. 44, 56, &c.

## DISSERT. II.

## OF THE NATURE OF VIRTUE.

- THAT which renders beings capable of moral government, is their having a moral nature, and moral faculties of perception and of action. Brute creatures are impressed and actuated by various instincts and propensions ; so also are we. But additional to this, we have a capacity of reflecting upon actions and characters, and making them an object to our thought ; and on doing this, we naturally and unavoidably approve some actions, under the peculiar view of their being virtuous and of good desert ; and disapprove others, as vicious and of ill desert. That we have this moral approving and disapproving \* faculty, is certain from our experiencing it in ourselves, and recognizing it in each other. It appears from our exercising it unavoidably, in the approbation and disapprobation even of feigned characters : from the words, right and wrong, odious and amiable, base and worthy, with many others of like signification in all languages, applied to actions and characters : from the many written systems of morals which suppose it ; since it cannot be imagined, that all these authors, throughout all these treatises, had absolutely no meaning at all to their

\* This way of speaking is taken from Epictetus,† and is made use of as seeming the most full, and least liable to cavil. And the moral faculty may be understood to have these two epithets, λογιστική and ἐποδιστική, upon a double account ; because, upon a survey of actions, whether before or after they are done, it determines them to be good or evil ; and also because it determines itself to be the guide of action and of life, in contradistinction from all other faculties, or natural principles of action ; in the very same manner, as speculative reason *directly* and naturally judges of speculative truth and falsehood ; and at the same time, is attended with a consciousness upon reflection, that the natural right to judge of them belongs to it.

† Arr. Epict. lib. i. cap. 1.

words, or a meaning merely chimerical: from our natural sense of gratitude, which implies a distinction between merely being the instrument of good, and intending it: from the like distinction every one makes, between injury and mere harm, which, Hobbes says, is peculiar to mankind; and between injury and just punishment, a distinction plainly natural, prior to the consideration of human laws. It is manifest, great part of common language, and of common behaviour over the world, is formed upon supposition of such a moral faculty; whether called conscience, moral reason, moral sense, or divine reason; whether considered as a sentiment of the understanding, or as a perception of the heart, or, which seems the truth, as including both. Nor is it at all doubtful in the general, what course of action this faculty, or practical discerning power within us, approves, and what it disapproves. For, as much as it has been disputed wherein virtue consists, or whatever ground for doubt there may be about particulars, yet, in general, there is a reality an universally acknowledged standard of it. It is that, which all ages and all countries have made profession of in public: it is that, which every man you meet, puts on the show of; it is that, which the primary and fundamental laws of all civil constitutions, over the face of the earth, make it their business and endeavour to enforce the practice of upon mankind; namely, justice, veracity, and regard to common good. It being manifest then, in general, that we have such a faculty or discernment as this, it may be of use to remark some things, more distinctly, concerning it.

*First*, It ought to be observed, that the object of this faculty is actions,\* comprehending under that name, active or practical principles; those principles from which men would act, if occasions and circumstances gave them power; and which, when fixed and habitual in any person, we call his character. It does not appear, that brutes have the least reflex sense of actions, as distinguished from events; or that will and design, which constitute the very nature of actions as such, are at all an object to their perception. But to ours they are; and they are the object, and the only one, of the approving and disapproving faculty. Acting, conduct, behaviour, abstracted from all regard to what is, in fact and event, the consequence of it, is itself the natural object of the moral discernment, as speculative truth and falsehood is of speculative reason. In-

\* ἀντὶ τοῦ ἀγνοεῖν καὶ παρὰ τὴν φύσιν, ἀλλὰ ἐνέργειαν. M. Anton. l. 9 § 16.  
Virtutis laus communis in actione consistit. Cic. Off. I. l. c.

## DISSERTATION II.

of such and such consequences, indeed, is always in-  
for it is part of the action itself; but though the in-  
good or bad consequences do not follow, we have exact-  
the same sense of the action as if they did. In like manner,  
well or ill of characters, abstracted from all considera-  
the good or the evil which persons of such characters  
actually in their power to do. We never, in the moral  
praise or blame either ourselves or others, for what we  
what we suffer, or for having impressions made upon  
we consider as altogether out of our power; but only  
we do, or would have done, had it been in our power;  
but we leave undone which we might have done, or  
have left undone though we could have done it.

Our sense or discernment of actions, as morally  
evil, implies in it a sense or discernment of them as of  
ill desert. It may be difficult to explain this percep-  
tion; but every one speaks of such and such actions as  
deserving punishment; and it is not, I suppose, pretended,  
that they have absolutely no meaning at all to the expression.  
The meaning plainly is not, that we conceive it for the  
society, that the doer of such actions should be made

For if unhappily it were resolved, that a man who,

It may be observed farther concerning our perception of good and of ill desert, that the former is very weak with respect to common instances of virtue. One reason of which may be, that it does not appear to a spectator, how far such instances of virtue proceed from a virtuous principle, or in what degree this principle is prevalent; since a very weak regard to virtue may be sufficient to make men act well in many common instances. And on the other hand, our perception of ill desert in vicious actions lessens in proportion to the temptations men are thought to have had to such vices. For, vice in human creatures consisting chiefly in the absence or want of the virtuous principle, though a man be overcome, suppose, by temptations, it does not from thence appear to what degree the virtuous principle was wanting. All that appears is, that he had it not in such a degree as to prevail over the temptation; but possibly he had it in a degree which would have rendered him proof against common temptations.

*Thirdly,* Our perception of vice and ill desert arises from, and is the result of, a comparison of actions with the nature and capacities of the agent. For, the mere neglect of doing what we ought to do, would, in many cases, be determined by all men to be in the highest degree vicious. And this determination must arise from such comparison, and be the result of it; because such neglect would not be vicious in creatures of other natures and capacities, as brutes. And it is the same also with respect to positive vices, or such as consist in doing what we ought not. For, every one has a different sense of harm done by an idiot, madman, or child, and by one of mature and common understanding; though the action of both, including the intention, which is part of the action, be the same; as it may be, since idiots and madmen, as well as children, are capable, not only of doing mischief, but also of intending it. Now, this difference must arise from somewhat discerned in the nature or capacities of one, which renders the action vicious; and the want of which in the other, renders the same action innocent, or less vicious: and this plainly supposes a comparison, whether reflected upon or not, between the action and capacities of the agent, previous to our determining an action to be vicious. And hence arises a proper application of the epithets incongruous, unsuitable, disproportionate, unfit, to actions which our moral faculty determines to be vicious.

*Fourthly,* It deserves to be considered, whether men are more at liberty, in point of morals, to make themselves miserable

without reason, than to make other people so ; or dissolutely, to neglect their own greater good, for the sake of a present lesser gratification, than they are to neglect the good of others whom nature has committed to their care. It should seem, that a due concern about our own interest or happiness, and a reasonable endeavour to secure and promote it, which is, I think, very much the meaning of the word *prudence* in our language ; it should seem, that this is virtue, and the contrary behaviour faulty and blameable : since, in the calmest way of reflection, we approve of the first, and condemn the other conduct, both in ourselves and others. This approbation and disapprobation are altogether different from mere desire of our own, or of their happiness, and from sorrow upon missing it. For the object or occasion of this last kind of perception, is satisfaction or uneasiness ; whereas the object of the first is active behaviour. In one case, what our thoughts fix upon, is our condition ; in the other, our conduct. It is true, indeed, that nature has not given us so sensible a disapprobation of imprudence and folly, either in *ourselves* or *others*, as of falsehood, injustice, and cruelty ; I suppose, because that constant habitual sense of private interest and good, which we always carry about with us, renders such sensible disapprobation less necessary, less wanting, to keep us from imprudently neglecting our own happiness, and foolishly injuring ourselves, than it is necessary and wanting, to keep us from injuring others, to whose good we cannot have so strong and constant a regard ; and also, because imprudence and folly, appearing to bring its own punishment more immediately and constantly than injurious behaviour, it less needs the additional punishment, which would be inflicted upon it by others, had they the same sensible indignation against it, as against injustice, and fraud, and cruelty. Besides, unhappiness being in itself the natural object of compassion, the unhappiness which people bring upon themselves, though it be wilfully, excites in us some pity for them ; and this, of course, lessens our displeasure against them. But still it is matter of experience, that we are formed so as to reflect very severely upon the greater instances of imprudent neglects and foolish rashness, both in ourselves and others. In instances of this kind, men often say of themselves with remorse, and of others with some indignation, that they deserved to suffer such calamities, because they brought them upon themselves, and would not take warning. Particularly, when persons come to poverty and distress by a long course of extravagance, and after frequent



monitions, though without falsehood or injustice ; we plainly do not regard such people as alike objects of compassion with those who are brought into the same condition by unavoidable accidents. From these things it appears, that prudence is a species of virtue, and folly of vice ; meaning by *folly*, somewhat quite different from mere incapacity ; a thoughtless want of that regard and attention to our own happiness, which we had capacity for. And this the word properly includes, and, it seems, in its usual acceptation ; for we scarce apply it to brute creatures.

However, if any person be disposed to dispute the matter, I will very willingly give him up the words *virtue* and *vice*, as not applicable to prudence and folly ; but must beg leave to insist, that the faculty within us, which is the judge of actions, approves of prudent actions, and disapproves imprudent ones ; say, prudent and imprudent *actions* as such, and considered distinctly from the happiness or misery which they occasion. And by the way, this observation may help to determine, what justness there is in that objection against religion, that it teaches us to be interested and selfish.

*Fifthly*, Without inquiring how far, and in what sense, virtue is resolvable into benevolence, and vice into the want of it ; it may be proper to observe, that benevolence, and the want of it, singly considered, are in no sort the whole of virtue and vice. For if this were the case, in the review of one's own character, or that of others, our moral understanding and moral sense would be indifferent to every thing, but the degrees in which benevolence prevailed, and the degrees in which it was wanting. That is, we should neither approve of benevolence in some persons rather than to others, nor disapprove injustice and falsehood upon any other account, than merely as an overbalance of happiness was foreseen likely to be produced by the first, and of misery by the second. But now, on the contrary, suppose two men competitors for any thing whatever, which would be of equal advantage to each of them ; though nothing indeed would be more impertinent, than for a stranger to busy himself to get one of them preferred to the other ; yet such endeavour would be virtue, in behalf of a friend or benefactor, detracted from all consideration of distant consequences ; as that examples of gratitude, and the cultivation of friendship, would be of general good to the world. Again, suppose one man should, by fraud or violence, take from another the fruit of his labour, with intent to give it to a third, who, he thought,

would have as much pleasure from it, as would balance the pleasure which the first possessor would have had in the enjoyment, and his vexation in the loss of it ; suppose also, that no bad consequences would follow ; yet such an action would surely be vicious. Nay, farther, were treachery, violence, and injustice, no otherwise vicious than as foreseen likely to produce an overbalance of misery to society ; then, if in any case a man could procure to himself as great advantage by an act of injustice, as the whole foreseen inconvenience, likely to be brought upon others, by it would amount to, such a piece of injustice would not be faulty or vicious at all ; because it would be no more than, in any other case, for a man to prefer his own satisfaction to another's in equal degrees. The fact then appears to be, that we are constituted so as to condemn falsehood, unprovoked violence, injustice, and to approve of benevolence to some preferably to others, abstracted from all consideration, which conduct is likeliest to produce an overbalance of happiness or misery. And therefore, were the Author of nature to propose nothing to himself as an end but the production of happiness, were his moral character merely that of benevolence ; yet ours is not so. Upon that supposition, indeed, the only reason of his giving us the above-mentioned approbation of benevolence to some persons rather than others, and disapprobation of falsehood, unprovoked violence, and injustice, must be, that he foresaw this constitution of our nature would produce more happiness than forming us with a temper of mere general benevolence. But still, since this is our constitution, falsehood, violence, injustice, must be vice in us, and benevolence to some, preferably to others, virtue, abstracted from all consideration of the overbalance of evil or good which they may appear likely to produce.

Now, if human creatures are endued with such a moral nature as we have been explaining, or with a moral faculty, the natural object of which is actions ; moral government must consist in rendering them happy and unhappy, in rewarding and punishing them, as they follow, neglect or depart from, the moral rule of action interwoven in their nature, or suggested and enforced by this moral faculty ; (Part i. chap. vi. p. 316.) in rewarding and punishing them upon account of their so doing.

I am not sensible that I have, in this fifth observation, contradicted what any author designed to assert. But some of great and distinguished merit have, I think, expressed them-

lives in a manner, which may occasion some danger, to careless readers, of imagining the whole of virtue to consist in singly acting, according to the best of their judgment, at promoting the happiness of mankind in the present state; and the whole of vice, in doing what they foresee, or might foresee, is likely to produce an overbalance of unhappiness in it: than which mistakes, none can be conceived more terrible. For it is certain, that some of the most shocking instances of injustice, adultery, murder, perjury, and even of persecution, may, in many supposable cases, not have the appearance of being likely to produce an overbalance of misery in the present state; perhaps sometimes may have the contrary appearance. For this reflection might easily be carried on; but I forbear.—The happiness of the world is the concern of him, who is the Lord and the Proprietor of it; nor do we know what we are about, when we endeavour to promote the good of mankind in any ways but those which he has directed; that is, indeed, in all ways not contrary to veracity and justice. I speak thus upon supposition of persons really endeavouring, in some sort, to do good without regard to these. But the truth seems to be, that such supposed endeavours proceed, almost always, from ambition, the spirit of party, or some indirect principle, concealed perhaps in great measure from persons themselves. And though it is our business and our duty to endeavour, within the bounds of veracity and justice, to contribute to the ease, convenience, and even cheerfulness and diversion of our fellow-creatures; yet, from our short views, it is greatly uncertain whether this endeavour will, in particular instances, produce an overbalance of happiness upon the whole: since so many and distant things must come into the account. And that which makes it our duty, that there is some appearance that it will, and no positive appearance sufficient to balance this, on the contrary side: and so, that such benevolent endeavour is a cultivation of that most excellent of all virtuous principles, the active principle of benevolence.

However, though veracity, as well as justice, is to be our rule of life; it must be added, otherwise a snare will be laid in the way of some plain men, that the use of common forms of speech generally understood, cannot be falsehood; and, in general, that there can be no designed falsehood without designing to deceive. It must likewise be observed, that in numberless cases, a man may be under the strictest obligations to what he foresees will receive, without his intending it. For it is impossible not to

## DISSERTATION II.

that the words and actions of men in different ranks and  
ments, and of different educations, will perpetually be  
by each other; and it cannot but be so, whilst they  
ge with the utmost carelessness, as they daily do, of  
y are not, perhaps, enough informed to be competent  
even though they considered it with great attention.

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# DISSERTATIONS

ON THE

EXTERNAL AND INTERNAL EVIDENCES

OF

# CHRISTIANITY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE

LATIN OF SAMUEL WERENFELS, D. D.

PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY, BASIL.

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By DAVID DUNCAN,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, HOWGATE.

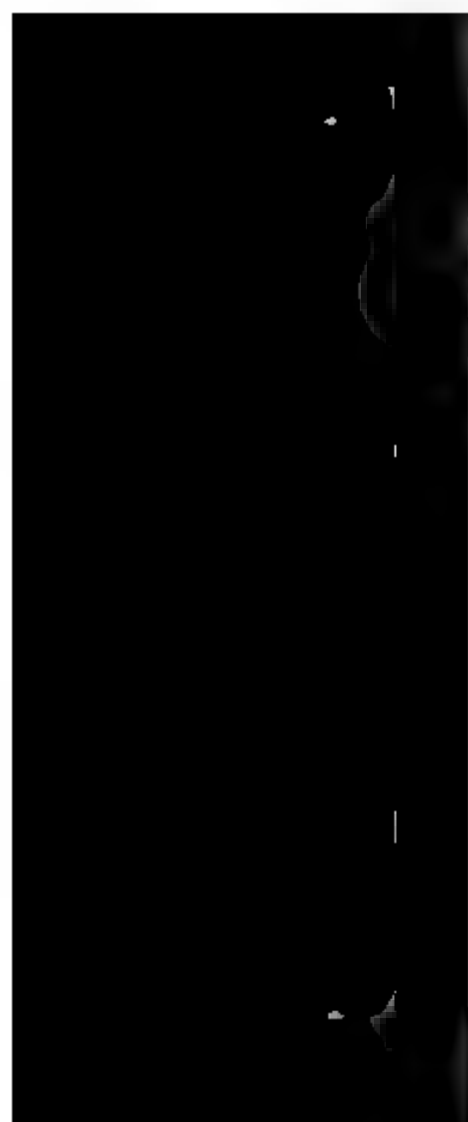
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1834.



## ADVERTISEMENT.

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**THE** Author of the following dissertations was Professor of Divinity in the University of Basil in Switzerland. He was born in 1657, and died in 1740. By Orme, in his *Bibliotheca Biblica*, he is characterised as “a man who thought for himself, and at the same time knew how to reverence the doctrines and authority of the Word of God.” His writings, which comprehended various Theological, Philosophical, and Philological disquisitions, were collected into one quarto volume, first published at Basil in 1718, and dedicated to the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign parts. Of all the writings of the continental divines of that period, this was, Dr. Erskine informs us, most highly esteemed by Principal Robertson, who was accustomed specially to commend the treatise “*De Logomachiis Eruditorum*,” a treatise which had much influence in terminating many useless controversies then keenly agitated.

The theological department of this work contains, besides a critical investigation of several of the most difficult passages of the New Testament, sixteen dissertations, six of which relate to the evidences of Christianity. A translation of four of these is here offered to the English reader. The other two are equally valuable, and may also be afterwards translated. They refer, the first, to the motives to virtue proposed in the Scriptures, and the second, to the threefold witness to the word of God, that of the church, of the Scriptures themselves, and of the Holy Spirit, determining the nature and the validity of each.

Of the value of the following disquisitions every reader will form his own opinion. The first and the last, which are substantially of the same character, bring into view a proof of the divine origin of Scripture, which does not perhaps occupy a



#### ADVERTISEMENT.

ly prominent place in most of the treatises on the evi-  
of Christianity. The writings not of the heathen only,  
modern deists also, display nothing of zeal for the divine  
Godliness has no place in their catalogue of virtues.  
of "walking humbly with God" is rather a subject  
ble to them. Had the Scriptures therefore been of  
origin, they would, we may believe, have resembled  
human productions. The argumentation in the two  
miracles is ingenious and striking. And if it does  
ence,—and what force of mere external evidence can  
men who will not believe,—must be sufficient to silence  
no question the reality of the miracles recorded in Scrip-

translator does not presume to think that he has succeed-  
aining the spirit and manner of the original, which is  
rised in a high degree by vivacity and elegance. He  
however, that the translation will be found to possess  
of correctness. And if it shall in any degree tend to  
ancement of the cause of truth and righteousness, his  
ill be gained.

## DISSERTATION I.

### ON THE EXCELLENCE OF THE RELIGION REVEALED IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES, AND ON THE NECES- SITY OF THIS REVELATION.

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HE who does not acknowledge that every thing which exists in this universe, the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that are in them proclaim the glory of God, must be regarded as destitute of understanding. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge: There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard.”\* But to no purpose would heaven and earth cry aloud, to no purpose would the whole universe unite to proclaim the glory of God, if there were none to hear their voice; or, to speak more plainly, to no purpose would beings destitute of reason, how numerous soever they may be, furnish the most abundant matter for glorifying God, if there existed no beings endowed with reason, who might embrace the opportunity, universally afforded them, of giving glory unto him. That for this purpose man was placed in the world by God, can be doubted by none who asks himself why he exists; why he has been endowed with reason; why he alone among the visible works of God understands the voice of every other creature proclaiming the glory of its Creator.

But if it is certain that men were formed chiefly for the sake of religion, it is by no means probable that, among the many religions which exist in the world, there is none true, none pleasing to God; since, were this the case, God would be

\* Psalm xix. 1—3.

#### ON THE EXCELLENCE OF REVEALED RELIGION.

glorified by his creatures, but the end which he has to himself would be universally frustrated. If, however, of these religions be true, it is doubtless that which is the most excellent, the most worthy of God, and the most satisfying to him. It is my intention briefly to show that the character of the religion which is contained in the sacred writings; and at the same time to demonstrate that a knowledge of it was necessary to make it known to those who were acquainted with it. And as religion consists of two parts, a just apprehension of God, and the right worship of God, let us consider, how far, in both these respects, the religion contained in the sacred writings excels every other.

As to the first of these subjects, a just apprehension of God, the Scriptures describe him as a Being altogether simple in essence, supreme, independent, illimitable, unchangeable; who always has been, and will be; whose wisdom is infinite, whose power is infinite; who, as he is one, produced all things by himself, and produced them by his mere will, calling the things that be not as though they were; who himself is able to preserve and govern, collectively and individually, whatever exists throughout the wide universe, who gives all continually life and existence and motion; who directs all things to his own purposes; who is everywhere present to them all, who thoroughly knows all things, past,

whatever kind it be, though it extendeth not to God, though it is due to him, and flows from his own grace. Nay, the Scriptures represent God as so good that he does not withdraw his care and his love even from those who are enemies and rebels against him, but towards them in a special manner displays the riches of his mercy and long-suffering, preserving them, bearing with them, heaping on them many favours, and (which is most worthy of notice) inviting them, averse though they be, to himself, waiting with the utmost patience for their repentance, nay, while they are flying from him, drawing them to himself.

And since our reason cannot reconcile the holiness of God, which is in the highest degree opposed to sin, and the strict justice of the inflexible judge, with this incredible goodness and mercy towards the sinner; the Scriptures discover to us also the means which divine wisdom has devised for reconciling them, and thus unfolds that “great mystery of godliness, God manifested in flesh, God purchasing his church with his own blood;” with which is connected the other mystery of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, which, though incomprehensible to reason, yet, apprehended by our humble faith to whatever extent, like a key opens to us the innermost recesses of the divine glory which it has pleased him to make known specially in the salvation of sinners.

There is nothing in all this repugnant to those views of God which nature dictates to every man; nay, the most consummate ingenuity of men has not as yet been able to devise, and never by reflection could attain to any conception of God more worthy of him, and more glorifying to his supreme majesty. If there are in it some things which surpass the apprehension of reason, this is itself an indication that this book is not the production of unassisted reason, especially as we find that those very things which are beyond the reach of reason are well fitted to confirm and reconcile what reason does teach respecting God.

To this view of God presented to us in the Holy Scriptures, the worship which they demand admirably corresponds. For they require that we worship God not so much by certain external acts and ceremonies of religion, which they designate “bodily exercise which profiteth little,” as “in spirit and in truth.”\* And although, in the Old Testament, God is represented as enjoining on the Israelites an extensive ceremonial system, yet the Scriptures everywhere indicate that these ceremonies were only shadows of spiritual things; and the books

\* 1 Tim. iv. 8. John iv. 23.

ON THE EXCELLENCE OF REVEALED RELIGION.

Old Testament itself, moreover, as often as a proper opportunity occurs, declare in the most forcible manner that these, when the homage of the heart is wanting, are not the worship in which God delights, and which he requires at the hands of men. Hear how sublimely God himself speaks on this subject in Psalm l. 7—14, and Isaiah i. 10—17. It may be added Psalm li. 18, 19. But the worship of God, which the Scriptures chiefly require from us, consists of those affections which an attentive and devout meditation of the divine excellence, and on our own indigence and sinfulness, must necessarily beget; which affections, indeed, so fully govern the sacred writers, that in this respect no other books can elsewhere be found; and we may affirm that all the books are characterised by a perpetual veneration of the divine name. Above all things, the Scriptures require that we do not merely speculatively contemplate and admire the excellence of God, but that our heart be so moved and affected by his goodness, power, justice, wisdom, and other perfections, as to love, reverence, love, fear him above all things, place universal confidence in him, implicitly acquiesce in his providence, remain in him, constantly adhere to him, and completely submit his will and all its affections to his will. This worship displays itself chiefly in the praise of God, in prayers and thanksgivings, as well public as private, in which

Holiness of life and constant obedience are not in Scripture, represented as the least important part of worship. By these we doubtless acknowledge God as our Lord and lawgiver; and at the same time testify the views we entertain respecting the character of the Lord whom we serve, that he is not one who has pleasure in wickedness, but who, as he is holy and perfect, desires us to be such also. To this branch of worship pertain all those precepts of which the Scriptures are full, which enjoin not only piety towards God, but also love to our neighbour, justice, truth, chastity, temperance, especially humility, patience, and charity towards all men, our enemies themselves not excepted,—precepts which cannot elsewhere be found so frequent, so clear, so perfect. All these things our Saviour testified pertain to the glorification of God. (Matth. v. 16.)

Now, in this worship of God the Scriptures desire us to be—Circumspect, both that we may be sure that we worship him in that manner which is most pleasing, not to us but to him, and also that the vast difference which our minds should always make between God and creatures may appear in all our words and actions, so that we not only compare nothing to God, much less equal or prefer any thing to him, but with the utmost vigilance abstain from every abuse of the divine name, and every rite which might in any manner imply that we give to any creature, even the least part of that veneration which is due only to God; an anxiety which is conspicuous only in the sacred Scriptures:—Fervent, and so completely devoted to it that our whole heart shall be upright before the Lord, and that in God's presence we forget not only the whole world, but ourselves also, nay completely deny ourselves, and pursue all things with a view to the glory of God:—Unyielding and persevering, so that contemning the honours and pleasures of the world, contemning even dangers, punishment, sorrows, death itself, we may persist in the worship of God to the last breath of life. In all these matters the Scriptures instruct us not only by perpetual precepts, but also by what is usually more efficacious, the innumerable examples of other saints, as well as the perfect example of all virtue furnished by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

And as all these things would be enjoined in vain on a sinner who, while his sin remains unexpiated, dares not approach a most holy God, so in nothing are the Scriptures more worthy of admiration than in this, that they exhibit the way in which an offended God may be pacified toward sinners, that is toward us all. A work so important as this cannot be effected

ON THE EXCELLENCE OF REVEALED RELIGION.

external ablution, or by frivolous ceremonies. The  
es require that the sinner from the bottom of his heart  
normity of his sins, feel what he has deserved, whom  
offended, and on that account humble himself, weep,  
groan; then that thus labouring and heavy laden he  
the mercy of God as his only refuge, and plead not his  
it, of which he confesses that he is altogether destitute,  
blood of bulls or of goats, but the blood of Christ, than  
nothing can be more precious in the estimation of God,  
which alone the Father can rest, and depending on this,  
entreat the remission of his sins from God; but en-  
not without the firmest resolution of amending his life,  
ating himself wholly to him who died for him, of living  
of imitating him in all things; and that he show that  
been his steadfast resolution by his conduct throughout  
of his future life, and more ardently love that God  
bought him at such a vast price, and more earnestly  
him in his body and spirit.

is the religion, this the manner of glorifying God which  
learned from the holy Scriptures. And now I put it  
conscience of any one, if all the men of all ages and coun-  
ough they had exerted to the utmost their ingenuity,  
ve discovered any thing more perfect than this religion.  
if there be a God, and if it be his will that he should



prophecies where they had never before been observed. I do not wish him as yet to read the Scriptures, even that he may become a profound theologian, that is, as this phrase is generally understood, that he may from them decide all the questions which the curiosity of idle men has started respecting God and divine things, that he may remove all the difficulties which are discussed in the schools of theology. In a word, I do not wish him to read this book that he may satisfy his eager desire of knowledge, and learn whatever an insatiable curiosity may wish to know respecting divine things. Thus do they read the Scriptures who read them *for scholarship*, to use the words of Seneca; but it must be read in another manner by him who reads it *for life*. He seeks nothing in this book, but the manner in which God is to be glorified; if he finds this he is satisfied, he feels no want. Let him who reads the Scriptures with this view, try every doctrine and precept delivered in it, whether it tends to this object. Let him ask respecting each, Is it not more glorifying to God to think thus, to act thus, than it would be to think otherwise or oppositely, to act otherwise or oppositely? Is it not more glorifying to God, for example, to believe that one Deity presides over the whole world than to multiply gods to such an extent that it would be no honour to be divine? Do we not glorify God more by joining profound humility with the greatest holiness, than we would, were we to plume ourselves on account of some appearance of virtue, and to esteem ourselves to be only not divine? &c. After he has thus examined its doctrines singly, let him examine them collectively, and the whole system of religion, which is revealed in holy writ, whether they do not all agree in this, and meet in the glory of God as their centre.

But they only are qualified to prosecute this inquiry who possess an ardent zeal, and a kind of holy passion to glorify God. For such persons alone can judge whether that method of glorifying God which they observe to be recommended in Scripture is the best. To this purpose are the words of our Saviour,—“If any one will do the will of my Father, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself;” (John vii. 17.) that is, as if he had said, if any one has a holy desire to obey my Father in all things, and to prefer his glory to every thing, and with this disposition listens to my doctrine, he will at once perceive that it satisfies his desire, that it is most glorifying to God, and therefore divine. Let him who has not this for his object know that he is unfit to form a correct estimate of the holy Scriptures; he judges of

them as a blind man of colours, or a loathing stomach of food. He does not seek, he does not attend to that which is of chief importance in them, and which particularly proves their divinity; his judgment therefore is of no value, and to him the language of Christ is appropriate, “How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?” (John v. 44.) Let every one then who reads the Scriptures examine himself if he feels an ardent desire, not to know, but to glorify his God; if this be his chief object in reading them; and then let him consider if the method which this book prescribes is not perfectly satisfactory. I am bold to say, that such a reader will here find all he desires, and, full of joy, will burst forth into the old exclamation *εὐρηκα*, *εὐρηκα*; \* and that while he longs for ability to glorify God according to the law which is here prescribed, he will find nothing defective in the law itself. If any one imagine that I say this rashly, let him point out a single individual full of zeal for the glory of God, who having long attentively sought in the sacred Scriptures a mode of glorifying him, has at last declared that the method which it prescribes is unsatisfactory, that he desires something more perfect. Such a person has not as yet been found; profane readers, that is those who cannot form a correct estimate of this book, may speak contemptuously of it; nobody will do so who has religion and God at heart above every thing else. †

When, however, we say that the doctrines and precepts of Scripture are to be examined with a view to this object, we mean those which are truly Scriptural, the doctrines of Christ, the prophets and apostles, not those of Aristotle, Plato, Thomas, Scotus, or others, to an agreement with which the words of Scripture are sometimes wrested; some of which, the apostles, if they were alive, far from acknowledging as theirs, would not even understand. He only perceives the beauty of the Christian religion who can see it in its ancient and apostolical simplicity, and thoroughly purged from the dross of human tradition, and of all philosophical appendages and sophistical comments. In this simplicity it, in former times, triumphed over all the religions of the world, and in a short period was diffused through almost every land; and could it again be brought back to this simplicity, its truth and its divinity would be much more clearly seen by every religiously disposed person. “There is something divine,” says Peter Cunæus, ‡ “in the rugged simpli-

\* I have found, I have found.

† See note I.

‡ De Republica Judæorum, lib. iii.

ity of the writings of the apostles, a simplicity which has been most successfully imitated by those who lived nearest to their age. Now in this old age of the world, after we have passed through the period of a sterilizing philosophy, it has come to pass that the solid body of divine wisdom has by frivolous and useless precepts been enervated and destroyed."

Let him, moreover, who desires to discover the divinity of the religion contained in Scripture consider not only its *theory*, the beauty of which, though very great, is often concealed by the innumerable questions and disputes of intemperate minds respecting it; but its *practice* also, to which it has all a reference, and which is less liable to be made a subject of controversy. If there existed anywhere a people who collectively and individually lived agreeably to the precepts of Scripture; who worshipped, and praised God, and prayed to him as devoutly, loved him as ardently, revered him as deeply, adhered to him as constantly, relied on him as confidently, obeyed him as carefully, submitted to his chastening as patiently; who as truly thanked him for his favours, desired to be reconciled to him when he was offended,\* curbed, governed, subjected to God themselves and all their affections and desires; who for God's sake loved one another as tenderly, helped one another as readily, did good to one another as liberally; who as fully sympathized with one another's distresses, bore with one another's infirmities, and forgave one another's offences; who were as pious, just, sober, chaste, sincere, faithful, patient, meek, humble; who, in the worship of God and in holiness of life, persevered as constantly, and looked forward to death not only as fearlessly but as joyfully; or, to sum up all in a few words, who were in every respect such, as that divine book wishes, as God the Creator, Preserver, and most loving Father requires, as the Son of God, who shed his blood for them, and the certain hope of eternal happiness procured by him importunately demand; if, I say, there existed anywhere such a people, what a lovely appearance would they present to God and to men. Among them would dwell the glory of God, and as much of human happiness as it is possible to enjoy on earth. You will perhaps say, that is a Utopian picture. I do not deny that it is, provided you acknowledge that it is a most lovely one. But this is the picture of the life (would that we more nearly approached it!) which the Scriptures propose to us; and if we swerve from it, the fault is in us, not in the Scrip-

\* See Note II.

#### ON THE EXCELLENCE OF REVEALED RELIGION.

After the attainment of this, they enjoin us to strive to our might. "He," says John, "that saith, I know God and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.\* Our weakness, however, is known to the author of Scripture, who proposes to us so perfect an example, that let there be only a constant and firm endeavour on our part, that this be united with persevering prayer to God; and if, notwithstanding, we fall, the same book points out a remedy to our content, "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: and he is the propitiation for our sins."†

There be any individual who does not yet perceive the difference of the religion contained in Scripture, let him compare it with every other, not with those of the Jews and Mahommedans, which owe to Scripture whatever excellence they possess, but with those of the heathen to whom no part of Scripture was known. He who attentively examines these will easily see that the religions of the world, that alone which is learned from the sacred writings excepted, whether you regard their doctrines respecting the gods, or their worship and ceremonies, or, what is of chief importance, their mode of appealing to their deities, are so vain and ridiculous, nay so im-

ligion of the Holy Scriptures is better than all others. They allow to be true what is there stated, that God is a being absolutely perfect, one in essence, the Creator and Governor of the world; that he demands from us invocation, prayers, praise, and especially a holy, peaceable, and innocent life; that he requires repentance for sin; that a state of rewards and punishment may be expected in another life, in which every one will receive according to the deeds done in this world: they allow, in a word, that there are many most excellent precepts in the New Testament, which enjoin humility, self-denial, and the honouring of God, civil duties, and probity of life; and that much more perfectly than is to be found anywhere in any religion with which we are acquainted.\* Yet they say that these things have not been revealed by God, but might all have been known by the dictates of reason.

We might reply, that not only are these things revealed in scripture, but other mysteries also, necessary to the proper glorification of God, and most intimately connected with those which reason teaches, yet wholly undiscoverable by reason. His answer from us, however, will not satisfy those who relish anything which savours of mystery. We must, therefore, furnish a reply more suitable to the apprehension of such men. We therefore, first of all, accept the admission which has been made by men who are by no means chargeable with credulity, that the religion of the Holy Scriptures is the most perfect of all religions, and the most agreeable to reason. They will consequently also grant that it comes from God in the same sense in which every good and perfect gift comes from him; for they could not be thought to deny the providence of God. If God governs all things, then from God are reason and the right use of this faculty, by which they who, while the whole world besides were altogether foolish, were enabled to discover the most perfect of all religions, have succeeded where others failed. That this religion is the gift of God is admitted on both sides; the only question is respecting the manner in which he has disclosed it, whether by quickening and directing the reason of men, so that they devised it themselves, or by some immediate and extraordinary revelation. We believe the latter, with all the Jews and the Christians of all ages and times; the former is the opinion of a few sciolists, who think themselves wiser than all others. But what induces them to oppose the general persua-

\* See Stillingfleet's Letter to a Deist, which contains a Compendium of Deism. See Note III.

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Are they afraid that our credulity may injure them? It would rather be an advantage to them that we should much the more steadfastness adhere to a religion which they also acknowledge to be divine and more perfect than any other. Am I wrong? Do they oppose the common notion that they may lessen the obligation to live agreeably to the precepts of this religion? For a religion devised by man has not so much authority over us, as if it were recommended immediately by God.

I ask further, whether a religion, however agreeable to reason, would have obtained credit with a people, the greater part of whom had neither leisure to attend to long reasonings about divine things, nor capacity to understand them, if it had not supposed that it proceeded immediately from God. For that Moses or Christ had affirmed that they, by long and deep philosophising, had discovered the true method of knowing God; and had offered to prove this by the strongest arguments to all who wished to know the method they had discovered. The Israelites or the first Christians would have refused that they were not philosophers. Or, perhaps, the same might have happened to Moses as to Socrates, who drew destruction on himself by introducing a more rational religion than the popular one, though by the testimony of the people he had been declared to be the wisest of men.

which is revealed in Scripture, or at least the most important part of it, might have been discovered by the unassisted efforts of reason. There is nothing easier than for those who are already acquainted with that religion to say so. It might indeed have been said by them if they had never heard any thing of this religion from any person during their whole life. But now they seem to resemble those who, though they have derived from their teachers whatever knowledge they possess, wish to be thought self-taught; or who, when they hear of any famous inventions, imagine that they would have discovered them all, if they had not previously been discovered. For if we would know what human reason is competent to discover in regard to religion, we should have recourse not to the reason of those whom the word of God has brought into the right way, whom it guides in it, whom it admonishes, confirms, reproves, and orders to retrace their steps when they are staggering and wandering in the exercise of their own reason; but to the reason of those who are ignorant of this word. And let the example of all the heathen, among whom were many of as powerful intellect as our modern rationalists, testify what monsters reason, when left to itself, begets. I may say, in a word, that merely rational religion, such as it is found in the world, is the religion of the heathen; the religion of deists is the religion of those who, having borrowed from Scripture whatever they please, affirm that they have discovered it by the exercise of their own reason. Experience thus most evidently joins with us in proving that it behoved God, if it was his desire to be glorified by men, to reveal the manner in which he should be glorified, and not to leave it to be discovered by human reason.

They will however say, that the most important truths respecting God and divine things taught in Scripture were indeed known to the heathen, insomuch that learned men have formed complete systems of a very pure religion entirely from the writings of the heathen.\* But various replies can be given to this assertion.

First. Those who have collected these things, have extracted from whatever writings of the heathen they could discover a few good and true things there mixed up with an immense number that are bad and absurd, which it is by no means wonderful should present to us, when gathered together and

\* See Pfanner's *Systema relig. pur. Gentil.* and Huet's *Concordia Rationis et Fidei.*



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a religion not altogether absurd. How much larger would it form, were we to collect with equal diligence what is false and impious in the writings of the heathen. There was no other excellence in the religion taught in the Scriptures than this, that it singly comprises all the writings which have to be scraped together from all the nations, and comprises these without the least mixture, and exhibits them all, not obscurely, or dubiously, but perspicuously, constantly, and with a full evidence; this would of itself prove the divinity of this religion of the book in which it is contained.

Ally. We must judge of the religion of the heathen, not from the writings of a few philosophers, but from their religious rites, which are so absurd, that it is no wonder there were to be found among them some who were too stupid to be satisfied with them. What, indeed! Has God created for his own glory only this and the other philosopher, who, after long and earnest meditation in leisure and retirement, at last discovered that the religion of his countrymen was more respects agreeable to reason, while he nevertheless had no better to substitute for it, but was himself perpetually wavering and fluctuating in religion, till at length he confessed, as Simonides, that the longer he thought of God, the more did the subject appear: nay, who durst not so

and Augustine,\* affirm concerning Plato, and Clement of Alexandria,† concerning Pythagoras, Aristotle, Numa Pompilius; whether Pythagoras had been the disciple of Ezekiel, which the same writer asserts was the opinion of many. It is certain that the most ancient authors of the Ionian and Italic philosophy derived many things from the Egyptians, and all the Greeks, from the Phenicians; both these nations, however, not to mention that they might have learned many things from the patriarchs, with whom they had daily intercourse, (as the former, without doubt, learned much from Joseph, a person of great authority among them,) were near neighbours, and well known to the Jews. Laertius speaks truly of that philosophy; “Some say that philosophy originated among the barbarians,” a confession which had long before been made by Plato, respecting letters and words, when he says, “We have received these from some of the barbarians, for the barbarians are more ancient than we.” How great travellers most of the philosophers were, we learn from Laertius;‡ and it is not possible but in their peregrinations they must have heard much from the Jews, or concerning the Jews. After the time of Alexander the Great, indeed, there was a constant intercourse between the Jews and the Greeks. It is also known to all, that the Holy Scriptures were in the time of Ptolemy Philadelphus translated into Greek; and many are of opinion that a translation of the Pentateuch existed before Alexander, nay, before the Persian empire. I say nothing here of the later Platonists and Peripatetics; Apuleius, Maximus Tyrius, Plotinus, Porphyry, Jamblichus, Proclus, Symplicius, Alexander Aphrodiensis, and others, whose intercourse with the Christians, and use of the sacred books, taught them to speculate more accurately concerning God. Hence there was much believed by the Greeks concerning the circumstances of the creation, the state of innocence, the fall of man, the deluge and other things, which being matters of fact could be known only by tradition; many of which are collected by P. D. Huet,§ so that I cannot understand how that eminent man has entitled another of his books, “Of the harmony of reason and faith,” seeing that very few of those things in which he shews the heathen agree with believers, have proceeded from reason, the greater number of them being the result of tradition; unless perhaps reason taught the heathen what they knew of the frequent appearances

\* De Civitate Dei, viii. † Stromata. lib. v. ‡ In Cratylo. p. m. 425.  
§ Demonstratio Evangelica, and Alnetanis quest.

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of the creation of man in the image of God, of the ages, of the longevity of the first men, of the ark and flood, of Sodom and Gomorrah, of the miracles of Moses, and many other things which he has collected with great care. These very things induce us to conjecture that the part of the just sentiments concerning God and his worship which were known among the heathen, had come to us by the same channel of tradition.

Now, having attended to these things as their importance demands, suppose that no part of the sacred Scriptures had existed in the world, that there had been no patriarchs, that the Scriptures ascribe a special intercourse with God, that there had been no Moses, no law given from Sinai, no Solomon, no prophets, that no Jesus had come in the world, that no apostles had existed, and, in a word, none of the holy writers or men of God of whom the Scriptures take notice. What I ask would have been the appearance of the world at this time? what kind of knowledge and worship of God would there have been? where would his glory have dwelt? What would be, or would have been the religion of the world? only of all (how numerous soever they are, or would be) Christians, Jews, Mahometans; but of the greater part of the heathen, of whom there are, or have been,

capacity from God, or laboured less in improving it? Is not the very opposite the truth, that the Hebrews in every thing that requires great power of reason were far inferior to the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, and other nations? From these we have received arts, sciences, eloquence, and almost every invention useful to the human race. Why then was it that in religion alone, this shrewdness in reference to all other subjects could avail nothing? Why does that single religion which is both the most perfect and the most agreeable to reason, come to us from the illiterate country of the Hebrews, where has flourished none of those arts by which reason is usually excited and improved? Why are the Hebrews as much wiser than other nations in religion, as they are more ignorant than these nations in every thing else? Why are the other nations ignorant of scarcely any thing except the true God and his worship? Why does that people know almost nothing but that very thing of which the others are ignorant? Why, in fine, do shepherds, herdsmen, fishermen, artizans, speak more pertinently than philosophers about divine things? Let us acknowledge that here there is something more than human; let us acknowledge that religion is not the invention of reason; that the cause of the wonderful superiority which appears in Scripture is the fact that there is a God, who “made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel;”\* who “shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation, and therefore they have not known his judgments.”† By some the style, the method, the simplicity of the sacred writers are little esteemed. Such persons know not what they wish; these very things shew how illiterate they were; how unfit to devise those things which the brightest genius could not have discovered, seeing they were destitute of that to which an ordinary capacity is equal. This confirms us in the divine truth, as often as we attentively consider the simplicity of the manner in which such things have been communicated by such men. Let us then adore the Divine providence which has omitted nothing calculated to establish the pious; and let us say with our Saviour, “We thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.”

\* Psalm ciii. 7

† Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20.

ON THE TRUTH OF THE MIRACLES

## DISSERTATION II.

THE TRUTH OF THE MIRACLES RECORDED  
IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

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### CHAPTER I.

THE MIRACLES WHICH ARE RECORDED IN THE SACRED  
SCRIPTURES IN GENERAL.

produce not merely attention but astonishment, and sensibly and palpably demonstrate the divinity of religion. This evidence is furnished by miracles, which are in reality the credentials given by the King of kings to those whom he counts worthy to be missioned in an extraordinary manner to men, that thereby he may secure confidence in their communications and submission to their authority.

We are not very anxious here to mark the distinction between miracles truly divine, and other wonders. It is obvious to every person that those which are recorded in Scripture far surpass the power of man. Should any one suspect that they have all been performed by some deceiving spirit possessed of more than human power, I ask him first accurately to examine the doctrine which has been confirmed by these miracles, and then to tell me what infernal spirit that could be, who has thought it so conducive to his interests that this religion should prevail and triumph over all others, as on that account to confirm it by so many and so great miracles? The prince of this world knows what the interest of his government requires, and will do nothing which tends to the overthrow of his dominion.\* I ask him further to tell me, why he is so credulous as to imagine that any finite spirit has performed so many and so great works in confirmation of what is false; and at the same time is on the other hand so incredulous as to be unwilling to acknowledge that God has performed any miracles in confirmation of what is true; as to be able to believe that God has permitted the devil so often by the most wonderful works to establish his authority over men; God himself, in the meanwhile, continuing altogether quiescent, and never doing any thing to vindicate his own glory? But I will not insist on these things, for the greater number of our modern infidels believe as little in miracles wrought by the devil as in miracles wrought by God; so that the only difficulty is to convince them of the truth of the miracles recorded in Scripture; which, being accomplished, it will be easy to bring them to acknowledge that they have proceeded from God.

“But how,” they will ask, “can we ascertain that these things have in reality taken place?” They are recorded in Scripture. “But the present business is to prove the divine authority of that book, and you cannot as yet make use of its testimony, as if it were infallible, to prove the truth of the miracles. For this would be, as logicians speak, a *petitio prin-*

\* Matt. xii. 25.

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I confess, indeed, that I cannot as yet assume the infallibility of Scripture with a view to establish the truth of the miracles recorded in it; but I may be allowed to examine its credibility, and after this examination to ascribe to it as much credit as the character of the witnesses, the manner of their testimony, the nature of the matter itself respecting which it is testified, and various other circumstances, I can prove it

I suppose, then, that I am arguing with an infidel, not an ignorant of past transactions. I ask him, does he believe nothing of what he reads in history respecting the exploits of the Great, or Julius Cesar, not even that Alexander the Great fought Darius, or Cesar with Pompey? If he carries his incredulity to such an extent as this, I have nothing to say to him; he has more need of hellebore than of arguments. But if he firmly believes these, and many other things of a like nature, he is never to think of calling them in question, while he is willing to credit the miracles recorded in Scripture, he ought either to produce some reason for the distinction which he makes, or confess that in making it he is governed more by party bias than by reason. There are only two reasons, which I am able to see, which he can allege. First, That the miracles recorded in Scripture are either impossible, or at least much less probable than other events which he believes.



ought to occur but seldom, and hence they are called miracles, because they are works of rare occurrence, exceptions from common laws, which, that these laws may not be subverted, must be exceedingly few.

Perhaps he may say, that though it may not be altogether repugnant to the character of God to perform miracles, yet it would be so for him to perform those which are specified in the sacred Scriptures. In that case it must be maintained, either that in these miracles there is something unworthy of God, as when Jupiter is said to have transformed himself at one time into a swan, at another into a bull, and at another into a shower of gold; or that they are alleged to have been wrought in support of a bad, or at least a frivolous cause, like those things which are said to have been performed in confirmation of some doting superstition, or of idolatry, or of some impure and impious system of religion. For to invent such things is evident blasphemy against God. But nothing of this kind can be affirmed. The miracles themselves are by no means unworthy of God, and they were moreover intended to confirm a religion, which, we have already seen, is in the highest degree worthy of God.

But the infidel will now plead, that though these miracles are not indeed altogether impossible or incredible, yet they are much more unlikely than are those other facts which are related in history, and that this is the reason why he easily credits the latter, while he cannot be brought to believe the former. Here, however, I demand, in the first place, if he believes nothing but what is probable. It was a maxim among the Greeks, that deviations from verisimilitude are requisite to verisimilitude,\* and the maxim is so far true, that the history in which you find nothing but what is probable, often on that account ceases to be probable. The poet alone, who invents facts at his pleasure, can contrive a story in which there is nothing that is not highly probable. But the historian relates facts as he finds them, and he frequently finds events having little probability mingled with those which are probable. If any one, therefore, choose to credit nothing but what is probable, he will withhold his assent from the truest histories. Should any one, however, be more unwilling to credit miracles, or events which are of an improbable character, than other facts, I do not contend with him, provided he form no decision respecting them till he has

\* *Εἰς τὸ γίνεσθαι, πολλὰ παρὰ τὸ εἶναι.*

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examined what is requisite for ascertaining the truth  
et.

regard to the miracles recorded in Scripture, they may  
first, abstractly, and in this view they are by no  
probable, I will go farther, they are hard to be believed;  
dly, they may be viewed in their connexion with the  
to which they tend, and with other facts which are  
and indubitable, or which, at least, are highly probable;  
this view I deny that there is any thing more probable  
and in other histories. In order to render this distino-  
plain, I shall illustrate it by a fictitious example. I  
that Titius, a very miser, has presented Mævius with  
a stone of immense value. This, viewed abstractly,  
to me almost incredible. It is added, that Titius is  
after a very lucrative public situation, and that the  
stone was given to Mævius, who is covetous but in  
our with the king, that through his recommendation  
obtain the situation. The fact formerly incredible be-  
to wear an aspect of probability. I learn, in a word, that  
as in reality obtained the situation after which it was  
aspired; and I cannot conceive how it was possible for  
have obtained it without the intercession of Mævius, or  
cession of Mævius, without a valuable present. Now,  
related becomes so very probable, that I can no longer

men, unless God himself has immediately revealed this religion to them; nor do I discover how they so readily received this religion as divine, unless they have witnessed miracles, or ascertained that they have been performed. When I take all these things into view, the miracles, so far from appearing to me incredible, seem almost certain.

But if any one would fully perceive the probability of the miracles of the sacred Scriptures, in their connexion with other facts, he must take into view the whole history of the Jews and Christians. Here I ask him if he imagines that every thing contained in that history is fictitious: that none of all those things recorded in it respecting the patriarchs, Moses, the Israelites, the prophets, &c. respecting Jesus, the apostles, the Christians of primitive times, are true? Surely there is no one so destitute of understanding as not to see, that this would be a more incredible thing than all its miracles. But the infidel may say, that truth is here mixed with falsehood. Let him then separate what is incredible and false from what is true and probable. He will, I believe, first of all set aside the miracles. But by taking away these, so far from rendering the history of the Jews and Christians more probable, he deprives it entirely of probability. Those things which in that history are most true and certain, lose, when the miracles are set aside, every appearance of truth, and become more incredible than the veriest fables. To render this assertion more plain, I shall illustrate it by a few very obvious examples.

Who will deny that there were long ago in Judea a few individuals, mean, illiterate, mechanics and fishermen, who in a very short time prevailed upon, I know not how many myriads of persons, to believe on one who was crucified; and so to believe that no kind of torture or suffering could eradicate their faith from their minds? In relating this fact you seem to be commencing a most extraordinary story. But add the miracles which Christ, which his apostles performed, which are said to have been performed during the whole of the first century from the birth of Christ, and you at once give plausibility to the narration.

Tell that a certain private individual had persuaded a numerous people, whose favour he had secured by no other than a mighty action, to assemble together at the same place, to deliver themselves from a powerful king, and relinquish their allegiance, to follow him to an uninhabitable desert: that he then imposed on them a system of laws, and punished the disobedient.

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of it with the utmost severity; that he provided many individuals, during a long journey through an uninhabited region, with food, and clothing, and arms; that he supplied all their necessities, quieted all their rebellions, suppressed all their murmurings, and though he performed none of these things, secured to himself while he lived the greatest honour, and after his death an immortal name, not only among his countrymen, but among all nations:—Tell, that the success of this individual fulfilled most exactly all the promises of his predecessor; that a general who could have acquired a knowledge of the military art nowhere and from nobody, with a few fugitives, unaccustomed to war, worn out with long marches, in want of every thing, entering a country which had been promised to their fathers, came, saw, conquered, that he instantly assailed and vanquished all obstacles, defeated powerful kings, captured fortified cities, levelled obstructions, and took possession of a country, which, so far from being uninhabited, was filled with an ingenious and skillful population, learned in the arts of war and peace; and that, as had been foretold, he divided among his followers the country which he had taken possession of:—Tell these things, and it appears a pleasing dream, unless you secure credit to the narrative by the miracles of Moses and Joshua. But for this it would be incredible that Moses should have attempted

laws which the Israelites have constantly in all ages affirmed, were received by them from Moses. The miracles of Christ also have been believed by many thousands from the time of Christ in the very places in which they are said to have been performed ; of which we shall afterwards have occasion to speak. These facts, if any facts are so, are morally most certain. But deny that the miracles either of Moses or of Christ took place, and you convert these most certain facts into fables which possess no appearance of truth, as I shall subsequently more fully demonstrate.

I have brought forward these things as a specimen. If any one will examine the whole history of the Jews and Christians from beginning to end, he will perceive the perfect accuracy of my statement, that the miracles of Scripture are so connected with other facts which he cannot without great obstinacy deny, that the latter derive all their verisimilitude from the former. This statement I am willing to subject to any test he pleases. These miracles, however, are rendered probable not only by their connexion with other facts which are not miraculous ; but even by their connexion among themselves. In order that this may be intelligible, suppose when you read the miracles of Moses that they are true, and then consider whether, their truth being admitted, it is probable that none of the rest have occurred ; for example, whether the miracles of Moses being admitted, you can deny those of Joshua, &c., or the miracles of Christ being admitted, you can deny those of the apostles. You will generally find that the miracles of Scripture are so connected that the admission of some requires the admission of all the rest, and the rejection of some the rejection of all the rest. Now, if it is difficult to conceive how a few of these miracles, if they are fictitious, could have been imposed upon so many persons at the time and place in which they are said to have occurred ; far more difficult must it be to suppose this, if all or even the greater number of them are fictitious, which, in consequence of their mutual connexion, must be affirmed. If, however, any one perchance should not discern this connexion in all cases, (how, for example, the miracles of Moses confirm those of Christ, which may be the case with such as do not well understand the prophecies of Moses respecting Christ,) by comparing the earlier with the later miracles he will clearly perceive that the later miracles always presuppose the earlier, that the miracles of the first Christians, for instance, confirm the miracles of the apostles, and these, the miracles of Christ, and those of Christ all that are related in the Old Testament ; of which, in like manner, the later de-

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the truth of the earlier. From which it follows that being denied, all the rest must be denied, and that the being admitted, all the preceding ones must be admitted. So proved, if I do not deceive myself, the *probability* of miracles of sacred Scripture, that to some I may seem to have almost proved their *truth*. But from all that said, I would at present infer nothing more than that miracles, every thing duly considered, not only are not true, but are as probable as those other facts related by historians, which are generally believed by every person; or the first ground of doubt which I mentioned has no place in them. Let us now consider whether the second ground of doubt can be maintained; that the testimony of historians to relate these miracles is less worthy of credit than the testimony of other historians which obtains credit from every where. If then a witness deserves the more credit, the less we have to presume that he either is deceived or deceives, than of no historians more worthy of credit than the sacred writers. May there are none who, in this respect, can be compared with them. For, in the first place, they could not by any means be deceived in the things which they relate. None have any other motives to induce them to guard against being deceived. For the question was, whether a most offensive doc-

blemishes and infirmities. You discover from a great many circumstances, from the very style, and the whole manner of their discourse, that the men were thoroughly convinced of the truth of what they write. You are so affected with the piety and zeal which give a zest to their writings that you cannot believe that so impious a fraud can be laid to the charge of their authors. You learn, in fine, that some of these historians have confirmed the truth of their history by a bloody death, a circumstance unheard of in regard to other historians. We have elsewhere shown that the sacred writers could not be influenced to deceive by the hope of any benefit; but that the fear of the greatest evils should have deterred them from deceiving. Why do I say from deceiving? So many evils, so many dangers might have been sufficient to deter them even from speaking the truth, and would have deterred them, if they had not been armed by God himself with more than human patience and fortitude.

But if an intention to deceive cannot, upon any ground, be presumed respecting our historians, far less can the power of deceiving be ascribed to them, whether you think of those who ought to be called the deceivers, or those who must be called the deceived. The deceivers were simple men, never trained in the school of imposture, by no means qualified to devise consistent fables, much less to accommodate them to the genius of every one, and to render the fables which they had invented acceptable to the people; nor sufficiently eloquent to win many thousands of men to the belief of their romances. If you consider who were to be deceived into the persuasion of this fable; think whether you would suffer yourself to be easily convinced that so strange a romance had happened in your own country, in a place well known to you, during this or the preceding year, in the presence of those with whom you could frequently converse, of your neighbours and acquaintances, nay of your wife, or brother, or mother, or father. But the sacred historians have accomplished a task as difficult, if what they write be entirely fictitious. Nay, they have accomplished a task much more difficult: for not only could every one of so many thousands very easily detect the fraud, but it cannot be doubted, if you consider the consequences resulting from the belief of these fictions, that they would use the utmost diligence to detect it.

Acknowledge now, O infidel! with whom we have been contending, that you are acting in opposition to reason when you question the truth of the miracles of the sacred Scriptures, and do not question the other facts related by historians. Are

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acles impossible? You will not even attempt to prove  
re they less probable than those other facts which you  
have happened? Nay, indeed, if you duly ponder  
matter, you will find nothing more probable than

Are those who relate them to you less worthy of cre-  
other historians? Certainly none deserve credit if  
not deserve it; none can with less probability be pre-  
be either deceivers or deceived. Admit, therefore, that  
ction which you here make is wholly unreasonable; that  
acles are as certain as those things which you regard  
most certain in history; nay, confess that, whether  
to the probability of the narrative, or the credit due  
timony, they are more certain than any other events.  
ld I now take it into my head to deny, and stiffly to  
h as much pertinacity as I could, every thing in his-  
h to you seems to be most true, you would find that  
d prove none of them with the same force of evidence  
h it can be proved that the miracles of Scripture have  
taken place.

a denial of the miracles of Scripture is not opposed to  
ome one may say, why does it happen that the most  
individuals are not the most firm believers of these  
Why is it that they who doubt them are those who



the facts of which we treat, as they deserve to be examined; they would in this way exercise that acuteness of intellect which they ascribe to themselves. If they have never done so, let them acknowledge that they are unable to judge of a matter which, either from stupidity they cannot, or from laziness they will not examine.

If, however, there are any, not destitute of talent, who, after a diligent investigation, continue to doubt of these things, I entreat them to look for the cause of this doubt, not in the understanding, but in the will and affections. They will find in the understanding no true and substantial reasons of doubt, but in the heart a kind of repugnance, a kind of difficulty to believe that the belief of which obliges a person to do and to avoid what it is very offensive and irksome to do and to avoid. To give credit to the transactions of Alexander obliges us to nothing that is irksome, but a belief of the miracles of Scripture obliges us to obey the precepts confirmed by these miracles, which are most unpleasant and offensive to the flesh. Hence also it is that men of genius, other things being alike, usually doubt more and more frequently of these miracles than dull and weak persons, not because the former by their quicksightedness discover indications of fraud in these facts, which the latter on account of their dulness do not perceive, for the contrary we have already proved is the truth; but because the more quicksighted men are, the more clearly do they discern all the duties which a belief of these facts requires. For weaker persons frequently reflect little on the nature of the life which results from this belief; they think that they may believe any thing, and yet live according to their pleasure. Those, however, who possess more shrewdness than others, see more clearly what kind of life corresponds to our faith; that this persuasion, if it enter their minds, demands from them a new mode of conduct, a new life; that it is absurd to believe what the sacred Scriptures relate, and to live as they have been accustomed to do. As they are unwilling to change the latter, that they may not carry about with them a continual source of self-reproach, and may not appear ridiculous and perverse to themselves and to others, they choose rather not to believe the Scriptures, than not to live agreeably to their belief. And once imbued with this prejudice, the very talents in which they excel can be of no other service to them than to enable them to deceive themselves with so much the greater skill, so much the greater dexterity.\*

\* See Note IV.

## ON THE TRUTH OF THE MIRACLES

### CHAP. II.

OF THE MODE OF INVESTIGATING THE CERTAINTY OF  
THE MIRACLES OF SCRIPTURE IS EXHIBITED, AND  
APPLIED TO THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST.

Having proved the truth of the miracles of Scripture in general, we should now prove the truth of the miracles of Moses, &c. in particular. To do this, however, in such a manner as would be sufficient for the conviction of any one, would furnish matter for a complete volume. I think, therefore, that I can do nothing better and more suitable to a limitation, than exhibit the mode of investigating, as accurately as possible, the truth of any kind of miracles, and exhibit it in relation to the miracles of Jesus Christ, the truth of which establishes the truth of all the rest. This plan may be compared with that which we employed in the preceding chapter, in order that every one may have the more full assurance that he has omitted nothing in an inquiry of so great importance.

Whoever of you then desires to know the certainty of any miracle, first, make the supposition that they are fictitious,

a fraud corresponds with their disposition ; but beware of presuming a fraudulent disposition from the simple fact that they have related these miracles, for you would thus be chargeable with reasoning in a circle, and with a *petitio principii*. Then examine every thing which could influence them to contrive such a fiction, and every thing which could deter them from contriving it. See which of these preponderate. This being done, consider, secondly, the nature of the miracles, their number and character, whether they are many or few, public or concealed, related circumstantially or uncircumstantially ; ponder these things with the view of ascertaining whether the contrivance of them would be easy or difficult. These things being considered, inquire, thirdly, what kind of persons were imposed on, or who first of all gave credit to these facts ; whether they were few or many, whether they were acquainted with the authors of the imposture, or unacquainted with them ; whether they were previously inclined to the belief of them or averse to it, friendly to the authors or unfriendly ; that from all these things you may learn what means they possessed of discovering the truth or falsehood of the miracles, what reasons they had to believe or to disbelieve them. Then, fourthly, inquire by what means the authors of the fiction imposed it on others ; whether they made use of authority, or eloquence, or learning, cunning, favours, promises, threatenings, &c. or means of a different kind ; whether these things can be laid to the charge of the deceivers.

While diligently investigating all these circumstances, if you see that your hypothesis, which supposes the miracles to be fictitious, leads to no absurdity, you cannot, indeed, regard it as true, but neither can you as yet reject it as certainly false. But if you find that your hypothesis, thus thoroughly investigated, cannot be retained by you unless you are willing to admit many things, improbable and foreign to the appearance of truth, the confluence of which is morally impossible, then reject it, and receive as most certain the opposite opinion, that these miracles have in reality taken place, and receive it with an assurance proportioned to the probability which, from a consideration of its scope and its connexion with other facts, the narrative seems to you to possess.

But in order that we may fully perceive the force of this demonstration, it must be observed, that the accumulation of a great number of improbabilities may be justly regarded as equivalent to a moral impossibility, even when singly they are not only not impossible, but such as have once and again oc-

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may even when some of them are but moderately im-

This I mention to prevent any one from supposing  
has eluded the force of this demonstration, by showing  
of the absurdities which result from the assumed hy-  
or something of a similar nature, has at times actually  
and, consequently, that it does not imply an impos-  
For the impossibility does not consist in each of them  
part, but in the whole viewed conjointly. Considered  
they are only improbable, some more, some less, but the  
of so many improbabilities is morally impossible.  
is any one who does not fully understand this, let him  
in those who are skilled in the calculation of chances,  
tly the improbability is increased by the conjunction  
three, or more improbable things.

Now then suppose, in conformity with the plan we  
down, that the miracles which are related respecting  
Nazareth are fictitious; and, that we may assign a  
for the invention of them, let us also suppose that they  
be devised about fifty or more years after the death of  
Palestine and Jerusalem, where they are said to have  
place, being laid waste and destroyed, those too being  
who could have testified as to their truth or their false-  
Now, two absurd and evidently false consequences re-  
the assumption of this period as the time of their in-

Christians long before this period, is as certain as any thing that is most certain in history. For, to omit other evidence, Luke tells us that Paul before his conversion was one of the chief persecutors of the Christians, Acts vii. 58; viii. 1—3; ix. 1 and 2, a fact which Paul himself acknowledges, Gal. i. 13, 23; 1 Tim. i. 13, 16. This cruelty would not have been acknowledged by the disciple concerning his master, nor by Paul concerning himself, if his persecution of the Christians had not been a reality.\* But from this it evidently follows, that there were at that period very many Christians in Judea and the neighbouring countries.

We must therefore go higher in fixing the date of this invention, even to the first commencement of the Christian sect, which was unquestionably in the very year of the death of Christ. In that year, therefore, the whole of this fable was contrived, and a great multitude made to believe that those facts on which the Christian religion is founded had occurred; some of them during the same year, others during the preceding year, and others two or three years before. The date of this invention being thus fixed, if we seek to know, *in the first place*, who were the authors of it, we will find that we cannot attribute it to any person with greater probability than to the first authors of the Christian sect, who might wish by such a contrivance to establish that system of doctrine which they taught. It must therefore be maintained that Jesus, (far, very far be it from us to give utterance to such a blasphemy,) commenced this imposture in concert with his disciples, by whom, after his death, it was carried on. Let us consider how far this supposition accords with the character of the authors of Christianity.

Jesus wished to convince men that he was the Christ, the Son of God; to this end he claimed the power of performing whatever miracles he pleased, of rising from the dead, of ascending to heaven, of thence missioning the Holy Spirit to his disciples, &c. Now, it is dreadful to say what we must think of Jesus, if all these things are fictitious. It is something which should strike terror into all who even suppose that there is a God who is the avenger of iniquity; something which it is incredible could enter into the mind of man. And it will be chargeable on him whom we hear speaking in the Gospel; who delivers to us precepts of genuine piety, and of every virtue, so perfect, so holy, so glorifying to God, so beneficial to

\* See Note V.

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who with so much zeal again and again inculcates them  
who deters us from every thing that is evil by so power-  
ful means; who so efficaciously incites us to all that is good;  
who teaches nothing but the most ardent zeal for God, and the  
love to us; whose only aim is to withdraw us from the  
world and its vanities, nay, to appropriate us solely to God, and  
make us at once completely holy and completely happy.  
In a word, who appears to us to be goodness, equity, love,  
truth, holiness itself, he will be of all whom the sun ever  
shines upon. \* \* \* \* Read, whoever you may be who can enter-  
tain a dreadful suspicion, read the gospels, hear only what  
Christ himself says in Matt. v. vi. vii. and unless you are inca-  
pable of shame, or possessed by some evil demon, you will not  
regard that suspicion as blasphemous, but you will banish  
the dream of insanity and delirium. Indeed, among all  
arguments for the divinity of the Christian religion, this, in  
my opinion, will come with the greatest power to the heart of  
every well-disposed person; that when he reads the gospel, or  
hears it read, he is so captivated with the doctrine of Christ, so  
impressed with all that he uttered, that it seems to him impos-  
sible that Jesus, who spake these things, could be such a per-  
fected man as he must have been if Christianity be false.  
The same judgment will every correct thinker form respect-

themselves, nay, which they secretly ridiculed? Where did they, who precipitated so many thousands of the human race into those most fearful evils which the profession of Christianity drew after it, learn to feign such a great and ardent love to mankind?

The character of those who must be called the inventors of the miracles we are considering, as far as we can discover it from their numerous sayings and writings, is, in an astonishing degree, opposed to an imposture the blackest that has been since men began to exist. But let us further inquire what could induce them to frame it. What did Jesus intend by that fable which they ascribe to him? If this question were put respecting Mahommed, the answer would be easy. His intention was to establish by imposture a power and dominion which continue to this day. But it would be difficult to tell what was the object of Jesus. A kingdom? Yes, but one not of this world, in which he came not to be ministered unto, but to minister to others. Did he seek honours, riches, or pleasures? He who wished to teach men by his own example to despise all these, whose whole life was humble, mean, destitute, temperate, laborious, afflicted!

We cannot suppose that Jesus had any other object in view than that which he has gained; that after his death he should be honoured by men as the Messiah and the Son of God, which he said he was. It is incredible that such an object should have entered the mind of the son of a carpenter; still more incredible that he should seriously have desired it; and most incredible of all that he should have hoped to attain it, and to attain it by those means which he did employ, and those coadjutors whom he did select. Did he hope to secure so high a pre-eminence without resources, power, authority, nay, by making all who were eminent for wisdom, authority, riches, and power, his enemies? Did he believe that his doctrine would prove highly acceptable to the people, and pleasant to carnal men, that it was peculiarly agreeable to the genius of Jews and Gentiles, and suitable to the prejudices of both? Did he believe that these fishermen and artificers were such powerful coadjutors as are requisite in great designs? or if he believed that they were qualified for this work, did he hope that they, whose timidity and fickleness he had learned by frequent experience, would, though frustrated in their expectation of a carnal kingdom to be erected by the Messiah, adhere steadfastly to him even after he had suffered an ignominious death; that for his sake they would assert the most shameless false-

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that they had seen Jesus raised from the dead, and going to heaven; that they would speedily convince many thousands of men of the truth of these and other things; that they would not cease to propagate them throughout the whole world; that whatever they should suffer on that account from Jews and Gentiles, men of all ranks conspiring for their destruction; that they would seal these falsehoods with their blood, and that their example in this would be followed by many others, so that at last his sect would triumph, possess extensive authority on the earth, and endure even to the end of time? Surely if Jesus was not what he claimed to be, it cannot be imagined that he could even dream that in prosecuting such an object he would in the slightest degree be successful.

What were the great advantages which Jesus promised to his followers, who were so constant, so faithful after him, so resolute in persevering, even to their last breath, in the posture which they had commenced? What could a man of no authority, so destitute that he "had not where to lay his head," have promised? What must he have promised who persuaded his disciples to despise all things, riches, honours, pleasures, every thing, in a word, but heaven? And if he had promised them any thing else, they would have discovered, when it was too late, that they had been most basely deceived. But he promised to his disciples on earth but poverty, contempt



ture that they could easily be forged. It would be too tedious to consider all their circumstances ; but he who may do so will observe many things which he will find could not have been forged in any way at the place, and during the period, in which they must be said to have been forged. I will touch upon the chief heads only. A *few* particular facts are more easily forged than a great many. But the miracles of Christ in themselves were so numerous that they followed in rapid succession, and so connected too with other facts, that along with the miracles many other things must necessarily be supposed to have been forged. *Common* events are more easily forged than miracles, which men are naturally reluctant to believe ; which, like Thomas, they wish to be visible and palpable to themselves ; which universally, while they call forth admirers, call forth also diligent investigators, and inquisitive scrutinizers of every thing. Miracles which *cannot be examined* are more easily forged than those which can be subjected without difficulty to examination. *Clandestine* miracles, performed when none but accomplices are present, are thus more easily forged than public ones ; *remote*, than those that are nigh ; *ancient*, than recent ; *devoid of circumstances*, than completely circumstantial. But the miracles of Jesus were public, performed in the presence not of his disciples alone, but for the most part in that of others also, the individuals on whom and before whom they were wrought being frequently very numerous, amounting to many thousands. They were forged, if they be forgeries, in the very places, and at the very time in which they occurred. They are related with all their circumstances, the country, the city, the village, the time in which, the occasion on which, and the persons on whom and before whom they were performed. In a word, a tale, the belief of which is *agreeable*, is more easily forged than one which is disagreeable. But if the miracles of Christ were forged, they are a tale the hearing of which, if you consider their consequences, is naturally disagreeable to all men. Unite all these difficulties, and they will of themselves constitute what the schoolmen denominate *a moral impossibility*.

This difficulty will be increased if you consider, *in the third place*, who they are who must here be regarded as having been deceived, or with whom these miracles first obtained credit. It is more difficult for such facts to obtain credit with many than with few. The miracles of Christ in a very short time obtained credit with I know not how many thousand individuals, nay I know not how many nations. It is more difficult for impos-

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tain credit with those to whom they are well known, than with those who are unacquainted with them. But the disciples obtained credit with those to whom they were most intimate and completely known, among whom they had lived from infancy, from whom they could not have concealed a dishonest and fraudulent disposition, who, in a word, could not be deceived by the imposture. It is more difficult to impose on those who are acquainted with the persons on whom the miracles are said to have been performed, and with the places in which it is affirmed they were performed, than with those who know nothing of these things.

But the miracles of Christ obtained credit with his countrymen, the fellow-citizens, the friends, the brethren, the brothers, the children, &c. of those on whom the miracles are said to have been performed; at least those who, as they went three times every year to Jerusalem, frequently converse with the eye-witnesses of these miracles, who frequently saw the places in which they are said to have taken place, and often visited them even after they had returned to their own country.

It is more difficult for miracles to obtain credit with those who are averse to the belief of them, than with those who are inclined to believe them. But the miracles of

ated, and of long continuance among Jews and Gentiles. We have been long accustomed to hear the doctrine of Christ; it does not now appear to us, to use the words of an apostle, such a stumbling-block or foolishness as it appeared at first to the Jews and the Gentiles. In a word, *we* can without danger believe the miracles of Christ, *we* cannot without danger disbelieve them.\* *They*, on the other hand, could, without hazard, ridicule and laugh at them; *they* could not, without hazard, believe them to be divine; innumerable evils, bonds, tortures, death, were the consequences of this faith.

But how could these miracles obtain credit both with Jews and Gentiles, the malicious enemies of Jesus and his doctrine? Why durst not those who deny their divinity, deny also their reality? Who can doubt that the rulers of the Jews inquired into the truth of these facts with the utmost diligence? Who can believe that the most powerful, wise, crafty, and vigilant men of their nation could be ignorant of any of those events which were said to be daily taking place in their country? What was there of which they could not have been informed by Judas Iscariot, the accomplice of the imposture, if there was any imposture in the matter? But, unless these miracles had been believed even by them, Christ would not have dared before his enemies to appeal so confidently as he does appeal to his works.† Why, moreover, do the evangelists, who relate with the greatest openness every thing with which the enemies of Christ upbraided him, and all the calumnies with which he was assailed, never intimate, that it was objected to him by any one that he had falsely pretended to have performed or to be performing miracles? Why was not this brought forward among the grounds of accusation advanced against him? Why durst none of the suborned witnesses affirm this? Nay, indeed, the very crimes which the Jews laid to the charge of Christ show that they were convinced of the truth of his miracles; as when they said that he profaned the Sabbath by healing men on that day, and that he cast out devils by the prince of the devils.‡ This latter calumny, by constant tradition transmitted from the Jews to their posterity, has at length given birth to a variety of fables, concerning the performance of miracles by Jesus, through means of the *four-lettered name*,§ secretly stolen, I know not how, from the temple; or by magic which he had learned in Egypt; and other fables

\* See Note VII.      John v. 16.    Ib. x. 25.      † Matth. xii. 10, 24.  
§ יְהוָה, Jehovah.

#### ON THE TRUTH OF THE MIRACLES

despicable, which, the more silly that they are, the more they imply a confession that miracles were in reality performed by Christ. For thus we see that the Jews in general rather to assign the most absurd causes for the miracles than wholly to deny them. Not to mention what is respecting them in the Jewish Talmud, and also by Josephus the genuineness of whose testimony has not yet been so questioned that there are not some who defend it by arguments far from being contemptible;\* the certainty of the resurrection of Jesus seems to have compelled Maimonides, who usually deal in trifles like the other Jews, to deny altogether that miracles were to be performed by the Messiah,† and Spinoza, of our time, to represent all the miracles of Scripture as I know not what necessary works of nature,‡ an opinion which perhaps obtain credit with some, who, like himself, linger on the general grounds of scepticism, taken from the prejudices of the vulgar, and their admiration of unusual events without any knowledge of which they are unacquainted, but with none who read the Scriptures, and investigates particularly the various miracles recorded in them with all their circumstances. As to the Gentiles, not only did many thousands of the most ignorant people, on the preaching of the apostles, immediately embrace the Christian faith, so completely foreign to

that the first opponents of the Christians had wholly denied the miracles of Christ; for thus an opportunity would have been furnished to the ancient fathers of proving their reality in such a manner as would have rendered it unnecessary for the learned of the present day to engage in that work. But while many monuments of the miracles of Jesus were in existence, nay miracles themselves to which Christians could appeal, it was not reckoned by crafty infidelity a proper season to deny them altogether; it was necessary to wait for a period sufficiently remote from these events, and in which it was supposed there did not exist documents sufficient to prove them.\*

If now we muster all those by whom, during the age in which they took place, and that which succeeded it, the truth of the miracles of Christ was believed, Jews, Gentiles, converts to Christianity, unconverted, friends, enemies; if we consider the means, and innumerable opportunities of discovering the imposture which they all possessed, with the grounds of caution, of distrust, of bringing to light and exhibiting to the whole world the detected fraud; if, I say, we contemplate these things conjointly, it must be evident to every person how unlikely, nay, how incredible the supposition of forgery must be. But how wonderfully will even this incredibility be increased, if we consider, *in the fourth place*, the means which the authors of this imposture employed to gain credit for it. It was not in the power of Jesus to allure men to his party by any favours, any hope of advantage, any fear of evil. He was reckoned a carpenter, the son of a carpenter, a Galilean, a Nazarene; he was poor, without outward splendour, without authority; he did not succeed by the favour of any of the powerful, the wise, or the learned; for all these he offended. His doctrine did not make him acceptable, it was disliked by all the learned of his age, and disagreeable to a truly carnal people. It cannot, therefore, be conceived in what way he could acquire a name in the world, or form even a moderate party, except by persuading the Jews that he had performed miracles; nor how he could so persuade men who were far from being prejudiced in his favour, except by actually performing them. If he wrought no miracles, what did his followers admire in him? What did his enemies regard with so much animosity, what did they fear? Why did they so vehemently cry crucify him, crucify him? Whom, by what means, in what manner did he gain, or could

\* Tertullian ad Scapulam, cap. ii and iv. and also elsewhere. Arnobius, adversus Gentes. lib. i. and others.

#### ON THE TRUTH OF TWO MIRACLES

to his party? What was afterwards to be dreaded from a contemptible a person?

What shall we say of his accomplices and disciples? Forsooth are such as by their character and sentiments enhance the authority of the party; crafty men fit for any whose eloquence nothing can withstand; who by their power can engage others on their side, by their power can seduce them. Every person knows that the apostles had none of these qualifications, nay, that Christ could not have selected men so qualified to invent a forgery, or to win men to the belief of it. And what were the means employed by them? They succeeded, 1. By relating these facts perseveringly, with all the circumstances, wherever they went, as facts fully ascertained, nay, seen by them, and which could be examined and proved by any person. 2. By agreeing in their relation of the facts, whether in speech or writing; yet so that the apparent agreement in the mode, the order of the narrative, and the enumeration of certain circumstances proved that they were not in concert. 3. By convincing men that they also, in relation of the miracles and doctrine of Christ, had received from the Holy Spirit the gift of miracles; that this gift they could likewise impart to others, nay, had actually imparted it to them. 4. By performing what may be regarded as a per-

evidently leads to an impossibility, we cannot doubt that it is false, and, consequently, that the opposite is true, or, as was our object to prove, that the miracles of Christ really took place.

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### CHAP. III.

IN WHICH A FEW OBJECTIONS WHICH MAY BE ADVANCED  
AGAINST THE MIRACLES OF CHRIST ARE REMOVED.

Nothing can weaken the demonstration given in the preceding chapter, except a demonstration on the other side, that the hypothesis which is opposed to that the falsehood of which we have endeavoured to prove, to wit, the hypothesis that the miracles of Christ are realities, leads to absurdities and improbabilities more numerous or greater, or unquestionably not less nor fewer than the other. In the former case, it would not be certain that miracles were not wrought by Christ, but only that this supposition is somewhat more probable than that which is opposed to it; in the latter case, not only should assent be withheld, but the judgment should be kept in a state of perfect equilibrium. But it has been already proved by us, that the subject of the narrative, that is, the miracles of Christ, are not only not impossible, but that when all things are duly considered, their scope, and the other facts connected with them, nothing is more probable than they are. He then would betray a weak mind, who, on discovering that this and the other consequence which at first seems to be not very probable, follow from the supposed truth of these facts, should on that account immediately begin to waver; seeing he would oppose to an impossibility only one or two things which are not very probable, and which, as he has no grounds for them, should be altogether neglected and counted as nothing by him who can form a proper estimate of every circumstance, and come to a solid judgment respecting it; as also because those very things which at first sight seem to him improbable, he will discover, after an attentive examination, to be highly probable. I shall present an example of this in the solution of two or three objections.

*It seems to be not at all probable that Jesus, after performing in Judea so many and so great miracles, should not have prevailed on the Jews to acknowledge him as the Messiah, and*

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not even have prevented them all from consenting to his son, nay, from importunately and perseveringly demanding of Pilate.

We already proved that it is far more incredible that he did no miracles, while, nevertheless, both before and after those things should have taken place which did take place, may, that it is indeed impossible to conceive how he could have stirred up against himself the fear and hatred and enmity of the Jews, which they discovered in his very crucifixion, by miracles. But that which is objected to us as improbable is highly probable, if we consider its true causes. The reason why few of the Jews acknowledged Jesus to be the Messiah was not a deficiency of miracles, for, as we have proved, those who believed that miracles were performed by him, who saw them with their own eyes, would not acknowledge that the reason of it was two-fold. First, the inveterate prejudice of the whole nation respecting the carnal and worldly kingdom of the Messiah, which Jesus with difficulty, and not even with difficulty, could eradicate in his disciples. "We trusted," said, when they thought him dead, "that it had been he should have redeemed Israel; and beside all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done."\* Now the appearance of Jesus was diametrically opposed to the



believed on him? But this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.\* These, especially the Pharisees, could not but be full of enmity against Jesus, not only on account of the direct opposition of his doctrine to their opinions and traditions, but also because he so often openly reprov'd their vices and exposed their wicked schemes, and (which chiefly enraged them), because he pulled off from them the mask of pretended sanctity, which was the principal source of their authority, by showing that all their sanctity was mere hypocrisy, affectation, and ostentation. Proud and vindictive men, irritated by these things, could not themselves form a correct opinion of Jesus, and prevented others, as much as they could, from forming such an opinion. Whence it was that there was nothing in Jesus, nothing done by him, which they did not make use of as a means of exposing him to the hatred of the people. They pretended that his country and family were obscure, in no respect corresponding to the Messiah; that his doctrine was impious and blasphemous, tending to the abolition of the law, which was esteemed inviolable by the Jews; that his character could be known from the sinners and publicans and other disreputable persons in whose company and conversation he delighted.

The miracles themselves by which alone Jesus could win followers to his cause, were also assailed. They found fault with three things especially in them. First, Their origin, for they said that they were wrought, not by the power of God, but by the power of an unclean spirit.† Secondly, Their design, for they maintained that they tended not to establish the law, but to overthrow it. This by the Jews was regarded as a very heinous offence, an offence as great as if Jesus had wished to introduce strange gods, in which case the law forbade them even to hearken to those who wrought miracles.‡ Thirdly, Their nature, because he showed them no miracles from heaven, whence he said he had come; because this repealer of the Mosaic law did not show signs greater than those of Moses, nor even equal to them. Hence those very Jews who saw Jesus feed five thousand men with five loaves and two small fishes, as if this had been nothing, demanded new signs from him, and such signs as Moses had wrought when he made manna to rain from heaven.§ If to these and other things you add the consideration, that Jesus did not publish many of his miracles, but concealed them and performed them in such a manner that

\* John vii. 48. † Matt. xii. 24. ‡ Deut. xiii. 1—3. § John vi. 30, 31.

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disposed might know his character from them, while the inclined and the hardened might find in them a rock of offence; and that thus there might be some who, as they knew Jesus should crucify the Lord of glory, and should do what the multitude and counsel had determined before to be done; if we consider these things, you will not be at all surprised that the miracles of Jesus did not accomplish more among the Jews than was accomplished by them.

The assertion, however, that the whole nation consented to the crucifixion of Jesus, nay demanded that he should die, to death, it can by no means be understood of all and of the inhabitants of Judea, but only of the rulers and of the multitude assembled around the judgment-seat of Pilate, and assented to by them, who at that time represented the Jewish nation. Nor can it be doubted, that some of that multitude were carried away by the current, and that the greater number were offended on this very ground, that Jesus, as it appeared to them, was not able to deliver himself from the power of his enemies. For even then began that offence of the cross, which afterwards the chief cause of the obduracy of the Jewish and then wretched men, by crucifying Jesus, created for ever. That very cross, which even to this day prevents the Jews from receiving the gospel. Nor, indeed, did Jesus

tians, and so to the whole church, miraculous gifts, which in the first ages abundantly evinced to all the truth of the resurrection and ascension of Christ. The fact that the evangelists do not bring forward to us more witnesses of the resurrection of Christ, should be regarded by us as an evidence of their perfect candour. For, as they founded the whole of their religion on this fact, why did they not pretend that Jesus arose in the presence and in the sight of many thousands, as they feared not to assert respecting his other miracles? Why do they not bring forward as many witnesses of the resurrection of Christ as of the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles on the day of Pentecost? Why do they not even pretend that Jesus arose, as he ascended, in the view of all his disciples? Why do they not say that he never departed from their side after his resurrection, or at least appeared more frequently during the forty days? Every person of discrimination will discover here the character of a most candid historian.

*But, you may say again, if Jesus possessed such ability to work miracles, why did this power sometimes fail him, as in his own country, where he could do no miracle, which the evangelists excuse by saying that he could not because of the unbelief of the people?\** Perhaps it was because he found none credulous and easy to be imposed on.

Before I reply to this objection, I ask the infidel, whether those then were true miracles which he is reported to have performed in other towns and villages? If they are true, Jesus did perform miracles; if they are fictitious, why did not the same persons who forged them affirm also that he did similar works in the city of Nazareth? The evangelists, moreover, either believed that this fact which they record would create suspicion respecting the power of Christ, or they did not believe it. If they did not believe, why do they excuse it? if they did believe, why do they record it? Acknowledge even in this an evidence of fidelity and candour. But to give a more direct answer; Christ could do no miracle in the city of Nazareth, not because of any want of power, but because of a previous purpose and decree determining to assist by miracles, which were all beneficial, only those who believe, a purpose which prevented him from performing miracles on unbelievers. But the faith which he required from those on whom he would perform miracles, was not a belief that he was performing, or had performed miracles, though nothing of the kind was visible

\* Mark vi. 5, 6.

#### ON THE TRUTH OF THE MIRACLES

as the church of Rome demands that the miracle of transubstantiation be believed though not perceptible to any of the senses. Jesus, however, required only that those who desired a miracle to be wrought on them or their friends, should believe that he was able to perform it if he pleased. Yet it is absurd to suppose, that this persuasion so prepossessed the minds of the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame suppose that they heard, spake, walked, &c. But we may perhaps find some other time an opportunity of discussing the nature and nature of this faith, the persons from whom Christ received it, and why he did so, as well as of replying to the objections which Christ required those on whom he wished to perform miracles to believe in his power, which was nevertheless proved by these very miracles. \*

*are surprised, that as miracles contribute to the conversion of unbelievers, the gift of miracles does not still continue, when there are yet many heathen to be converted to Chris-*

...al, at the present time, desired the conversion of any nation whose conversion miracles were as necessary as in former times, he would impart the gift of miracles to those to whom he wished to employ in that work. But

istians, and their afflicted and abject condition, rendered miracles necessary for the spread of Christianity, while the condition of Christians at the present time, their numbers and their character, are fitted to attract the attention of unbelievers equally as miracles. Fourthly, Those who were first employed in converting the heathen needed new miracles, because they could not appeal to the past; but, at the present day, they can appeal to all past miracles, and prove them to unbelievers in the same manner in which they prove them to all who entertain doubts respecting them, provided they can first engage their attention, which may be done by a variety of other means. For to mention nothing else, the consent of Christians, Mahommedans, and Jews in the belief of the miracles of Jesus, the consent of Christians and Mahommedans in the belief of the miracles of Christ, if not sufficient to prove the truth of these miracles, is at least sufficient to engage the attention of the heathen, and to prevent them from rejecting these facts without examination.\*

\* See Note X.

ON THE CERTAINTY OF THE PROOF

### DISSERTATION III.

OF THE QUESTION, WHETHER MIRACLES  
ARE A CERTAIN EVIDENCE OF TRUTH.

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ve last year publicly disputed concerning the truth  
acles recorded in the sacred Scriptures ; among the va-  
stions agitated among the learned on this point, none  
to me more important than this—Whether or not mira-  
certain evidence of the truth and divinity of a doctrine.  
difficulties which have been urged. I gave such a reply

I know indeed that the Hebrew and Greek terms employed in Scripture to denote that which we call a miracle, have a greater latitude of meaning, and sometimes signify any works, whether of God or of other beings, which are worthy of admiration, especially those which require, or seem to require in the general estimation of men, a greater than human power, of whatever kind it may be. But in this question we understand the term miracle as expressive of those extraordinary works, which in Scripture are ascribed only to God. Theologians are accustomed to make a distinction between *wonders* and *miracles*, understanding by the latter, extraordinary works peculiar to God, by the former, works proceeding from another and inferior power, a distinction which, as it is highly useful, we shall retain.

Having premised these things respecting the definition of the term, I would divide the question we are to discuss into two branches, so that we may inquire, first, Whether miracles abstractly considered, are of such a nature that the truth and divinity of the doctrine in confirmation of which they are wrought may be positively concluded from them ? and secondly, Whether it is possible for men accurately to distinguish true miracles from what are simply called wonders, and what are the marks by which they are to be distinguished ? On the explanation of these two inquiries the solution of the whole question depends.

The first inquiry I do not consider a difficult one. I think it may simply be affirmed that the truth of a doctrine may be positively concluded from miracles, and that for the following reasons.

1. Because it seems to be wholly repugnant both to the holiness and to the truth of God to say, that he would lend the sanction of his power to establish and to propagate the impositions of designing men ; which would certainly be the case, if at their desire he should perform miracles which could only tend to confirm their imposture. This we cannot maintain without affirming that God conspires with men to deceive the simple ; nay, that he contributes more to this end than the impostors themselves, by lending the sanction of his power to give authority and influence to the falsehoods of men ; a sentiment which, how it can be entertained without blasphemy, I do not perceive.

2. Because, on the one hand, there is nothing which more powerfully impresses men, and constrains them to yield assent to others, than such kind of miracles ; and, on the other, there

is nothing by which God can more clearly indicate, more effectually demonstrate, confirm and inculcate to the majority of mankind the true worship of himself than miracles. Wherefore it does not seem consistent with the divine goodness to do any thing by which he sees that the best of men, and those who are most ready to believe and obey him, would infallibly be deceived ; nor with the divine wisdom to employ in confirmation of a falsehood the means best adapted to establish the truth, nay, absolutely necessary in regard to all who cannot by the exercise of reason alone acquire a knowledge of religion ; and thus to render those means ambiguous and uncertain.

3. If the truth of a doctrine could not with certainty be inferred from miracles, those who have from them inferred the truth of a doctrine would be chargeable with vicious reasoning ; as for example, those who from miracles have concluded that the law of Moses is divine, nay, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. Those moreover who were commanded to believe on the ground of the miracles they witnessed, were laid under obligation to reason illogically. And those, in a word, who would not believe, however many and great miracles they witnessed, were unjustly condemned, nay, were unjustly subjected to a more aggravated punishment than would otherwise have been inflicted on them.\*

4. To these things we may add, that the confusion which does not exist in the kingdom of the devil cannot by any means be supposed to exist in the kingdom of God. In the judgment of Christ, the kingdom of Satan would be divided against itself, if the devil were to perform miracles which tend to the destruction of his kingdom.† Who then will maintain that God does perform real miracles, which are made use of by impostors to advance the kingdom of the father of lies, and to subvert the kingdom of God ?

5. Finally, the avowed object of miracles which were performed with the view of confirming a preached doctrine, and have been recorded that those who read may believe,‡ demands our assent to this conclusion. For if God, knowing that this was their object, should accompany a false doctrine with miracles, he would confirm it, and wish it to obtain credit ; which it were blasphemy to affirm.

These remarks are sufficient, and in my opinion more than

\* 2 Kings v. 15. 1 Kings xvii. 24. John iii. 2 ; iv. 53. Acts iii. 6, 16 ; iv. 10, 30 ; ix. 35 ; xiii. 12. John x. 37, 38 ; xiv. 11 ; xv. 24. Matt. xi. 20—24. † Matt. xii. 24—26. ‡ Mark xvi. 20. John xx. 31.



ufficient to shew that the truth of a doctrine may with certainty be inferred from miracles.

No valid objection to this conclusion can be urged from Deut. xiii. 1—3. For we have already seen that the words which in the sacred Scriptures signify miracles, are used also in a more extensive acceptation, to denote those other works which are commonly called wonders. Of this class are מופת, אֵיזֶר, *sympsona*, *répara*, *δυνάμεις*, &c. With regard to the assertion that God would try the Israelites by the miracles of false prophets; this is not to be understood as if it implied that God tries his people by performing miracles opposed in their design to those which he has previously wrought, which would be a snare and deception unworthy of God; but he tries them by permitting the performance of such wonders as may deceive unstable men who are not steadfast in their adherence to a doctrine already confirmed by many and great miracles. God, it is elsewhere affirmed, tempteth no man to evil.

Nor can any valid objection be urged from the example of the Egyptian magicians. For we deny that the wonders performed by them were true miracles, although in appearance, and to some extent, they were similar to the miracles of Moses. We would not however determine, whether the works performed by these magicians were realities, or whether all that they did were mere delusion and jugglery; as it is not exactly known to man how far the power of demons, under the permission of God, can proceed, or how much these spirits can accomplish by means of their instruments. This is certain, that these works were not from God; nor can it be proved that they were so, from the fact that God often declared that he would harden Pharaoh's heart; for if the magical works of the Egyptians contributed any thing to the hardening of his heart, they can be ascribed to God only to this extent, that he permitted the performance of these things which combined their influence with others to prevent the hardness of Pharaoh's heart from being removed by real miracles.

The same judgment must be formed respecting the false Christs and the false prophets, of whom it is foretold, that "they shall shew great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect;"\* as also respecting Antichrist, "whose coming," it is said, "is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders."† For to none of them is the power of performing true

\* Matt. xxiv. 24.

† 2 Thess. ii. 9.

#### ON THE CERTAINTY OF THE PROP

scribed; nor is it said that they would shew miracles  
operation of God himself. From terms which, as we  
eed, are used in a great latitude of meaning, nothing  
ferred. The miracles of Antichrist are explicitly call-  
διδους, which properly denotes, not miracles wrought  
t of what is false, but, as is more agreeable to the  
the Hebrew language, false miracles. It is moreover  
added, that he would come "with all deceivableness  
ousness," which seems to refer, not only to a delu-  
sion, but also to delusive miracles. With regard to  
ion that God should "send them strong delusion;"  
to be understood as if he would secure respect and  
o error by the performance of miracles; but it implies  
would permit Satan to exert all his power to deceive  
o perish, not receiving the love of the truth. This  
t from the fact that the "strong delusion," (διδυμι  
which it is said God would send, is in ver. 9 called  
rking of Satan." (διδυμι το σατανά.)

inally, can it be objected to us, that it is said of the  
that they will boast that they have prophesied, and cast  
s, and done many wonderful works in the name of the  
For it cannot be denied that many who were not true  
of Christ, abused his name to cast out devils.† That  
done even by the children of the Pharisees." some

arance, is yet calculated to disturb the peace of the church, and to dissolve its order and unity. Every member of the church must be desirous that his pastor may be truly and from a heart pious; and that this should be continually entreated from God with fervent prayer is carefully noticed in the form of election and ordination of pastors. But although this is necessary to the pastor himself, and most useful to the church in general, yet it is not absolutely necessary to its members for salvation, who, when under the superintendence of God in the ordinary course of election they obtain a pastor that belongs to the number of those "who say but do not," should comply with the rule of Christ, "All whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works." A similar advice might formerly have been given to Christians in the imitative church, in which there were ungodly persons, renowned for the gift of miracles; "Receive the doctrine which they confirm by miracles, and believe and obey it, but imitate not the conduct of those who perform the miracles."\*

We come now to the second subject of investigation, to wit, whether, and in what manner true miracles can with certainty be distinguished from other wonders? That they can be distinguished, is clearly demonstrable from the same arguments by which we have evinced that the truth and divinity of a doctrine may and should be inferred from miracles; for this could not be done unless there were some marks by which a true miracle could be distinguished from every other wonderful work. This, therefore, we consider as already settled. We may however add, that the signs characteristic of a true miracle should not be such as require, for their discovery, a high degree of mental acumen, or science, or learning. For miracles are brought forth for the confirmation, not of philosophers or learned men alone, but of the illiterate and the simple, in whom they are frequently intended to produce a persuasion even of those things with which philosophers may to some extent become acquainted by the light of nature alone.

The only difficulty then is to ascertain the marks by which true miracles may be certainly distinguished from mere wonders. It is commonly said that infinite power is requisite to the performance of miracles, while finite power is adequate to the accomplishment of other wonders. But this rule will scarcely enable any person certainly to distinguish a true miracle from another wonderful work. On which account this

\* See Note XII.

characteristic was not proposed as the means of distinguishing divine works from others, either by Moses or by Christ, when the Pharisees objected to him that his signs were not real miracles, but only wonders accomplished by the aid of an evil spirit. For no man can precisely determine how far the agency of finite power can extend, seeing that God, when he reckons it proper, can increase it according to his pleasure. And even although it could be exactly determined by some philosophers, yet it could not be apprehended by the vast multitude of common people, to whom, we have seen, as truly as to metaphysicians, true miracles must be distinguishable from spurious. Besides, if God should, by the agency of a human being, perform a work which, while it far surpassed the power of him by whose instrumentality it was wrought, did not require a power positively infinite, who durst deny that that work of God was a true miracle? I conceive, with deference to the judgment of others, that a real miracle can be known with certainty by the following marks. (It must however be observed that I speak of miracles performed through the instrumentality of men, with the view of establishing their doctrine, and that I have no reference to those which for other purposes are performed immediately by God.)

1. *When an individual performs, in order to confirm his doctrine, some remarkable work which, it is universally admitted, far surpasses the power of man.* For from this it may be certainly inferred that he has not performed that work by his own power, but by the power of some far more mighty invisible being, who is desirous to secure respect to his authority among men, by means of those whose instrumentality he is pleased to make use of. It is requisite that the work surpass the power of man, which I regard as competent, not merely to those things which a person can accomplish immediately by his own strength, but to every thing which he can effect by the employment of other natural causes, and by the application, as it is expressed, of active to passive things; that is, as far as their force can be naturally known by man. It does not, for example, surpass the power of man to elevate a weight, however heavy, by means of mechanical instruments of his own invention, &c.

It is requisite, also, that the work should *far* surpass the power of man; for thus every one who witnesses it will be the more thoroughly convinced that it has not been effected by human power alone, but by the power of a being whose strength is much greater than that of man. I shall therefore show, by

a single example, what is meant by a work which *far* surpasses human power. To cure in any manner a disease which is universally admitted to be incurable, surpasses the power of man ; still more does it surpass human power to cure it without the employment of any remedies ; still more, to cure it in a short period ; still more, to do so in a single moment ; still more, if the cure be so perfect, that he who was labouring under a long-continued illness instantaneously attains the highest measure of health ; for so sudden a change from one extreme to another is reckoned by every person completely beyond the sphere of nature. No one is so devoid of intellect as not to see that such a work *far* surpasses the power of man ; the natural and experimental physical knowledge of every person is sufficient to understand this ; and if any one would hesitate about the matter, the agreement of all whom he may consult respecting it will instantly remove every feeling of dubiety.

2. *When he who has performed the miracle, before it was performed, knew that it would take place, promised it, and willed its occurrence ; while its nature is such that it could not have been foreknown by human skill.*

An individual might boast that any wonderful event which has happened in the world, and with the causes of which men are unacquainted, has been effected by his power ; the Pharisees, for example, might have boasted that they by their divine power had darkened the sun at the death of Jesus, with the design of showing that he who called himself the Christ was a deceiver of the people ; but by doing so they would only have exposed themselves to ridicule, inasmuch as none of the Jews at the time of the death of Jesus foresaw or promised that such an event would take place. The sacred Scriptures expressly mention this condition as a means of distinguishing miracles.\* Now, an individual proves that he foreknew that a miracle would certainly take place, when he predicts or promises it, whether verbally, as Moses generally did, (of this nature also are the authoritative words, “ rise up and walk ;” “ Lazarus, come forth,” &c.) or by other signs and gestures ; as when he engages in the presence of a multitude to perform a miracle, and excites the expectation of it in others ; or when he does or says any thing the design of which is perceived, when the miracle instantly succeeds ; and other things of this kind which may be observed in reading the account of miracles. The case is similar to what we have now stated when a miracle takes place, which was not indeed promised by him who performs

\* Deut. xviii. 21, 22.

#### ON THE CERTAINTY OF THE PROOF

these four marks evidently meet in any extraordinary  
may, in my opinion, be ascribed without danger to God  
and be regarded as a true miracle, nay should be re-  
s such. For truly, unless it be such, the very best  
t may be deceived, even when he is most careful in  
against error. Because, as experience testifies, he  
prevent himself from ascribing works so admirable to  
om he regards as above every thing worthy of admira-  
er than to any other cause; and he would in his own  
n be disobedient and obstinately incredulous if he did  
e as divine a doctrine attested by such works, and he-  
obey it. But it is by no means credible that the  
ellent ruler of the whole universe governs human af-  
uch a manner that pious men, anxious above every  
to defraud God of any part of the worship prescribed  
cannot but be betrayed into error. And should God  
en to any beings an extraordinary power of which we  
thing, we can from his infinite goodness at least hope  
ill not permit them to abuse this power for the pur-  
ceiving those who, sincerely and as diligently as they  
avour to discover the right method of glorifying their  
he end that they may believe and obey him; who in-  
ll men least deserve to be deceived in a matter of such  
stance

proves the truth of each, for if any one should be so devoid of understanding as to doubt whether one of these miracles surpasses the power of man, he cannot, unless he be insane, entertain the same doubt respecting the whole. Now the cause of them all must be the cause of each. How greatly the number of the miracles contributes to establish the truth of each may be learned from Exodus iv. 9, Matt. xi. 20, John vii. 31, and other passages of Scripture. On this account it was that Moses and Christ, whose mission above all others was to be proved by miracles, performed not a few merely, but a great number. Moses, according to the enumeration of the Rabbins, performed seventy-six miracles; but Christ performed so many, that if they had been written every one, the world itself could not have contained the books that should have been written.\*

3. In the character of those who perform the miracles; when in addition to the performance of miracles other tokens of a divine commission appear in them; when, for example, they possess also the gift of prophecy, or of an extraordinary knowledge which they have not acquired by study; when in the discharge of their office they uniformly show that they are seeking not their own things but the things of God, from whom they have received their commission; an evidence of truth to which Christ refers as observable in himself.† To this head belong all the characteristics of true prophets, and especially all the characteristics of the Messiah by which he is distinguished in the writings of the prophets. When these characteristics are combined with miracles, the less doubt can be entertained respecting their truth and divinity.

4. In the doctrine itself which the miracles are intended to confirm; when it not only contains nothing repugnant, as we formerly noticed, to a true system of doctrine already proved by miracles; but also possesses many obvious indications of a divine origin; such as being full of wisdom, worthy of God, and truly glorifying to him; and when, moreover, as hitherto unknown, it requires such a species of confirmation. For as a miracle is an evidence of the truth of a doctrine, so a doctrine also is an evidence of the truth of a miracle. In making this assertion we ought not to be regarded as reasoning in a vicious circle; for both miracles and doctrines possess distinct and peculiar marks of a divine origin, which have no mutual dependence, so that the one may indicate the origin of the other, while the union of both ascertains more clearly the origin of

\* John xxi. 25.

† John vii. 16, 17, 18.

#### ON THE CERTAINTY OF THE PROOF

ust as two ambassadors, each furnished with distinct  
s, may confirm one another's commission.

e statements be applied to Christianity and the mira-  
h have been wrought in its support, they will, I trust,  
e much to convince every impartial judge of its truth.

ident that in the preceding demonstration we have  
assumed the existence and providence of God. Should

anded if the existence of God can be proved, or an  
onfuted by miracles, I answer briefly, that miracles

no means necessary as an evidence of the divine  
; since his ordinary works, the works of creation and

providence, are sufficient, and more than sufficient, for  
ose.\* Nay, there is not an animalcule so despicable,

table so contemptible, as not to furnish evidence that  
a God. Justly, therefore, has it been said by Lord

' There was never miracle wrought by God to convert  
t, because the light of nature might have led him to

God : but miracles have been wrought to convert idol-  
the superstitious, because no light of nature extendeth

e the will and true worship of God."† But although  
have not been performed by God for this end, and are not

to it, yet they are arguments well fitted to demonstrate it.  
affirm in opposition to the views of Spinosa. For if

s, that all the events recorded in the sacred Scriptures



himself rather than this other imaginary being ? I would ask him, in a word, whether he admits or denies the existence of another being greater in dignity and in power than he by whom these miracles are performed ? If he admits that there is, he admits the existence of a supreme being ; if he denies it, this being is himself supreme, and as such is entitled to adoration and worship.

ON THE ZEAL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

## DISSERTATION IV.

ZEAL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD EVERYWHERE  
CONSPICUOUS IN THE SACRED SCRIPTURES.

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of considerable magnitude, the production of human  
ce, were to be published as a work proceeding from  
merely human, not to say carnal tendency, would fre-  
quently betray its earthly origin. In it man would occupy a  
prominent place. On the other hand, a book "given by

the Scriptures, so to speak, are avowedly more occupied in overthrowing one crime than another. There are no crimes which more directly assail the divine glory than idolatry and pride. The glory which is due to the true God alone, idolatry gives to false deities, pride, to proud man. Idolatry changes "the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and creeping things; it changes the truth of God into a lie, and worships and serves the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever."\* The proud man makes himself his God; "he sacrifices unto his net, and burns incense unto his drag;"† he says in his heart, "I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the Most High."‡ We may say also that there are no crimes with which the whole Scripture wages more constant warfare than these two; so that both the Old and the New Testaments seem to treat of almost nothing else.

But here it may be proper to advert to a circumstance which I know not if it has ever received a due measure of attention. Men are vehemently inclined to both of these vices; with this difference, however, that the illiterate and the carnal, who are like children, are prone chiefly to idolatry; the more intellectual and refined, to pride. In reference to this, the astonishing wisdom of God shines forth in the Scriptures. The Israelites were an illiterate and carnal people, addicted to I know not how many childish things, and on that account greatly inclined to idolatry. In the Old Testament, therefore, God specially labours to destroy idolatry among this carnal people; this is above every thing else the design of the law; this is the object both of its promises and threatenings; this is the aim of the numerous miracles by which God distinguished himself from the false deities of the heathen, and of the many divine judgments inflicted on idolaters, and on his own people also, as often as they defiled themselves with idolatry; this is the purpose of the apparently cruel devotement to destruction of idolatrous nations, and of the prohibition of all intercourse with them on the part of the Israelites. All was intended to inspire the Israelites with a horror of that crime. Moses and the prophets everywhere proclaim war against idolatry. What? do you say. In every part of the Old Testament God seems to

\* Rom. i. 23, 25.

† Hab. i. 16.

‡ Isaiah xiv. 13, 14.

proclaim nothing else than what is thus expressed in Isaiah, "I am Jehovah; that is my name, and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images?"\*

Here it occurs to us to ask, by the way, whether it is more probable that men who display so much anxiety to extirpate idolatry among their countrymen, in order that they might adhere to the worship of the one true God, the maker of heaven and of earth, are anxious about this on their own account, for the sake of power, authority, honour, or other things of high estimation among men; or rather on God's account? And if this anxiety is on his account alone, whether it is more probable that they were actuated by a human, or by a divine impulse? Would it not have been more advantageous to Moses and the prophets to have indulged a carnal people whose propensity to idolatry they could scarcely restrain, and thereby have rendered them more compliant; than to have pressed at so much hazard to themselves what was peculiarly obnoxious, and forcibly with the most ardent zeal to have destroyed the idols, the people's delight? would not this have been better fitted to secure the object they had in view, if, as profane men surmise, they were crafty impostors, who were seeking only personal advantage, and power and honour? Who does not see that their souls were full of zeal for God, and that they subordinated every thing to the divine glory?

Moses and the prophets having at length, by numerous addresses and promises and threatenings, and by the performance of numerous miracles, accompanied by continual divine judgments against idolaters, extirpated the love of idolatry among the people of God, this evil was speedily followed by a new plague, not less hostile to the glory of God, Pride. The greater number were turned from the worship of idols, not so much to the true worship of God, as to a high conceit of themselves. For the people of God, reflecting on the care which he had manifested towards them above the rest of mankind from the earliest ages, began to entertain lofty ideas of their own character, to despise others in comparison with themselves, to admire their own righteousness, to look for justification before God on the ground of it, to regard all the favours conferred on them, not as flowing from his grace, but as due to their merit. This was their character when our Saviour appeared among them. Idolatry I admit there was none: but all were full of pride. With this hydra, therefore, he in a particular manner contend-

\* Isaiah xlii. 8

ed. No sect among the Jews so frequently experienced his reproof as the Pharisees ; a sect swollen with a high conceit of their own righteousness, and possessing the greatest influence in consequence of the harmony of their tenets with the haughty views of the people. Their pride it was his chief object to discountenance ; and this he did by discourses, by miracles, by example. His life was a scene of constant abasement ; his birth, his parents, his education, his mode of living, his apparel, his disciples, his friends, his followers were humble ; his death was, if I may so speak, the very acmé of humility.\* This seems to have formed the sum of his discourses, “ Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart.”† So far from seeking ostentatiously to display his miracles, he sought to conceal them. The apostles, too, as they exemplified in their life the humility of their master, so in their writings they teach nothing but what is opposed to pride ; that all are sinners, the Jews equally with the Gentiles ; that it is by the grace of God they differ from one another ; that it works in us both to will and to do ; that Christ is our righteousness ; that while we embrace him by faith, he is both the author and finisher of faith. Nay, not only the doctrine but even the very diction of the apostles breathes a certain holy humility, which none else have exemplified ; so that we may say that the character of the New Testament is entirely humility, as that of the Old is zeal for the worship of God unmingled with idolatry. And hence while the Scriptures oppose all the sins which exist in the human heart, they are in a particular manner opposed to the two which are most hostile to the glory of God ; and, which is worthy of admiration, two which the heathen did not even reckon to be crimes, the former being the mode of worship by which they sought to propitiate the favour of God, and the latter being esteemed as of all virtues the chief.

Here also it may be asked, for whose sake do the apostles uniformly recommend humility, and such humility as forbids men to glory in their holiness and righteousness ? They above all others might have boasted of their holiness, if it had been lawful to boast of holiness. Men would have permitted them to do so, if God had granted such permission. Besides, if it was their object to acquire fame by the propagation of a new doctrine in the world, it was most foolish to exhort men—creatures fond of glory—to humility, and to a humility unheard of amongst most nations—a humility which requires man to

\* Phil. ii. 5—8.

† Matt. xi. 29.

#### ON THE MEANS FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

little to his own strength and merit, as after innumerable evidences of the possession of a virtue so heroic, such as the apostles enjoin, after shedding blood for religion, to believe that he has done nothing, to ascribe every thing to God, nothing to himself, and to expect no reward but what is wholly of grace. Who, un- less more anxious to please God than men, will inculcate such earnestness, on that proud creature whom we call man? What doctrine so offensive? What sane person could have thought that it would be embraced by any, nay that it would be so throughout the whole world, and survive to future ages, unless he had been convinced that it proceeded from the power of the Holy Spirit, whose energy could cause it to make an impression on the hearts of men?

The Scriptures destroy every thing in the minds of men that is hostile to the glory of God, and labour to accomplish destruction with an earnestness proportioned to the violence of its hostility; they also direct those things, which are implanted so firmly in men's minds that they cannot be eradicated, to God and to his glory. All the natural desires of men flow from one source, a longing after happiness, and nothing but the entire loss of their being can divest them of it. When this, therefore, is turned to God alone, all other

obtain it is, if you believe the Scriptures, to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent.\* Nay this life itself is nothing else than a perpetual union with God, which in the sacred writings is called “the vision” of him. The Scriptures, so to speak, clothe God in such forms as render him highly desirable to men of all classes. They describe him as a Father who pitieth men, like as a father pitieth his children; as the most loving and most amiable husband of the church, the very sight of whom imparts satisfaction;† as a Shepherd whose flock shall suffer no want,‡ who so loves his sheep as to lay down his life for them.§|| Now he is our light, then our food and our apparel; here he is our portion and inheritance, there our shield and exceeding great reward; at one time he is our refuge and the rock of our heart, a fortress and our high tower, and at another, our safety, our solace, our life. But who can enumerate all the characters in which he is exhibited to us? Why is God presented in so many different aspects? Assuredly for this reason, that man may expect in him the satisfying of every wish which can spring up in his heart; that it may be seen that there is in God whatever can possibly be regarded as desirable in any thing else; that the pious reader of Scripture may be led to him, and not look beyond him in whom he finds all things, and may regard him as God all-sufficient, sufficient for him and for others; that our soul may regard him as the only and as the highest good, God being its own God, which is often proposed to us in Scripture as the perfection and the end of all good; that it aspire after no other joy than to be joyful in the Lord, and to rejoice in his salvation;¶ that in a word, it deem every thing worthless in comparison with God, and being full of God, exclaim, “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.”\*\*

Reader, pause here, and consider whether the doctrine which this book uniformly inculcates, a doctrine which withdraws your mind from every creature and directs it to God, must proceed from a creature or from thy Creator. If you can suppose the former, show, if you are able, in the whole universe, even one among all the books of all nations and ages that bears a resemblance to it. Show the book whose uniform and only design is to teach you that God alone is your chief good, of

\* John xvii. 2.

§ John x. 11.

\*\* Psalm lxxiii. 25.

† Psalm xvii. 15.

|| See Note XIII.

‡ Psalm xxiii. 1.

¶ Psalm xxxv. 9.

#### ON THE ZEAL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD

A vast number of the wisest of men that have written on this subject have almost never thought ; nor merely to teach your understanding, but to induce you to labour with the greatest effort to attain this good. Show the book which so reconciles man to himself, man formed to prosecute his happiness, with man formed solely for the glory of God, and the objections which seem to be inconsistent. Show the book which reconciles these so perfectly that your conscience cannot be troubled, by proving that so far from being at variance, they are in reality identical ; that God is glorified by your happiness, and you are happy in glorifying God ; that to desire to be happy and to desire your own happiness is to desire one and the same thing ; that the hope of happiness, in which believers are so much interested, is a "hope of the glory of God ;"\* in a word, that the happiness in a future life will be nothing else than an eternal glorifying of God.

The tendency of the doctrines of Scripture we have already, in the preceding pages, considered more fully in the Dissertation on the Excellence of Revealed Religion : it will not be difficult to see that the tendency of the *Prophecies* is the same. For we cannot perceive in the writings of the prophets that counsel for God and for his glory, which you will look for in



about their own houses, but about the house of God. They foretel not those vain things which men are most anxious to know, but those things which God is chiefly concerned that they should know; they foretel not only joyful, but disagreeable events; they do not wait till they are interrogated by men eager to penetrate into futurity, but, missioned by God, they foreshow to men, however unwilling, what they dislike to hear. They do not hunt after the favour of princes, but at the peril of life encounter the wrath of high and low. Their aim is most manifest; it is to restore the neglected worship of God; to free it from the blemishes by which it has been contaminated; to amend the wicked manners of rulers and subjects; to alarm the people of God, grown wanton and proud in consequence of prosperity, by the denunciation of divine judgments hanging over them as well as others whose sins they imitate, and in whom, to the neglect of God, they place confidence; to console and encourage them in their afflictions by foretelling their deliverance from evil and the future kindness of God to them; to fortify them against temptations by describing their coming state; and, which is the chief object of the prophecies of the Old Testament, to lead believers to a more enlarged knowledge of the great Deliverer who was to come, and thereby to increase more and more their confidence and their hope in him.

The only aim of the prophets, then, is the glory of God. How? Because prophecy itself, in its own nature, illustrates the omniscience of God in knowing even contingent events long before they take place; whence God, to put the false deities to shame, thus by Isaiah reproves their ignorance of futurity: "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods."\* Of the same character is the confession respecting the true God of Israel forced from Nebuchadnezzar by Daniel; "Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret."†

We come now to the *History* of Scripture, which in so singular a manner tends to the glory of God, and is in this respect so different from all the histories of all ages and nations, that he must be blind indeed who cannot perceive the wide distinction between them. Were you to inquire whose history it is that was written by Q. Curtius, the man who should reply

\* Isaiah xli. 21, 23.

† Dan. ii. 47.

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and written the history of Hephæstion, of Parmenion, of Perdiccas, or of the Macedonian army, would be to have given a not pertinent answer. You would say that Q. Curtius wrote the history of Alexander the Great, that he occupies the chief place in that history, and that the rest are subordinate to him. In like manner, if it were asked what history is contained in the books of Moses, Judges, and the other parts of Scripture, you would not less ignorant answer were you to say that it contains the history of the patriarchs, of Moses, &c. of the Israelites, of the apostles and primitive Christians. It contains the history of God, of God alone, the Creator and Lord of the world. He is the chief object to whom every thing in the history refers, nay the only conspicuous object in it. The patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, the Israelites, are of no greater account, than Parmenion, Hephæstion, Craterus, the Macedonians, &c. to whose courage, and wisdom, and fidelity Alexander owed a great part of his glory, are in the history of Alexander. In it all are nothing in comparison with God. None of the transactions recorded in it belongs to them, but all belongs to God. To God we may apply the words of Cicero in his oration for Marcellus. God "has no associate in the world" which results from the transactions narrated in the whole of the history.

fallen ; and draws them to himself by innumerable acts of kindness and almost constant miracles. Them in an astonishing manner he rescues from bondage, and leads, as it were, by the hand, during a long course of wanderings, into the land promised to their fathers. To them he points out the way, them he provides with food and raiment, with them he is always present to aid them by his counsel, over them he watches, for them he fights. He gives them most holy laws ; he explains these laws, and determines their controversies ; he executes these laws, punishes the disobedient, rewards the obedient. What, then, in all this is ascribed to men ? Those who are most extolled look to God in all that they say and do, without him they dare neither move nor advance, him they consult in all cases, him they follow, from him they expect a prosperous issue to their undertakings, to him alone they ascribe the success they have obtained. Nothing succeeds with them without God. As often as they do not see him going before them, or suffer him to remove out of their sight, they err, they rush headlong into the most grievous sins, and thence fall into the greatest evils. Nor is there any thing in the Israelites to attract his favour. They are a people illiterate, indocile, intractable, exceedingly prone to superstition ; so that it seems to have been the purpose of God to display, in a peculiar manner, his power and his wisdom in inclining them to his worship, and to seek a perpetual occasion for miracles.

You discover in this history none of those things which are principally the subjects of celebration in others. You do not find among the people of God the inventors of arts useful to mankind ; if there were any such, the sacred writings are silent as to their inventions. You do not find here prudent legislators ; God alone is at once the lawgiver and the interpreter of the laws. The founders of cities are not celebrated above others ; the first founder of a city is infamous for fratricide and despair. Monarchs and mighty conquerors are not extolled ; these are often so described that nothing appears more odious than they. Great orators are not celebrated ; the greatest confesses in this history that he was slow of speech. None are famed for learning and wisdom ; the wisdom of Solomon, I admit, is proclaimed, but it was divinely communicated ; and it seems to have been communicated for the very purpose of showing that even the wisest sometimes act like the greatest fools. The pious are extolled above others, but so extolled that the blemishes of all, and the great crimes of some of them, are at the same time brought into view. What then ? say

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The whole of this history is so constructed in order that  
rise from the perusal of it fall of admiration, not of  
of God.

which is usually the chief subject of celebration in his-  
rers. The minuteness which other historians display  
description of these cannot be told. There you are  
what the general, what the tribune, what the centu-  
at the legions, what the squadrons, what individual  
have done; how much prudence, how much courage,  
h the commander's address to the troops, how much  
ontributed to success. Nothing that pertains to men  
led, while they are frequently silent respecting Him  
success is chiefly owing. How different from these  
story of the wars of the Lord. In it, it is God alone  
s cities, overthrows bulwarks, and defends them as he  
oper, gives counsel, devises stratagems, marshals the  
mmences the engagement, inspires his army with  
and fills his enemies with terror; in a word, obtains  
ry, takes possession of the conquered countries, and  
e people into subjection. Let any one reflect on the  
s wars successfully prosecuted by the Israelites. Not  
much as one victory is ascribed to their own courage.  
written, they have been successful because they had  
lful in marshalling an army, in taking advantage of

Jerusalem was defended against the vast army of Senacherib. Do you wish a single combat? Read the conflict between David and Goliath. Do you wish a general engagement? Read the wonderful engagement between three hundred men under the conduct of Gideon and the army of the Midianites. These I refer to by way of example. Many more I could adduce. Memorable in a particular manner is the engagement between Amalek and the Israelites. *Exod. xvii.* The Israelites, under the conduct of Joshua, fought with the Amalekites. This is announced in very few words. But what is Moses their prince represented as doing in the history written by Moses himself? He goes not forth to battle, he does not marshal the host, he is not present to aid Joshua with his counsel, he does not exhort his troops to act courageously. What then? While others are fighting, he stretches forth his hands holding a banner to God. What was the cause of the victory? Joshua and the soldiers contributed nothing to it. When Moses held up his hand Israel prevailed, when he let down his hand Amalek prevailed. But lest we should ascribe too much to Moses, he became wearied with lifting up his hands to God, and they were occasionally stayed by Aaron and Hur. No trophy, therefore, was erected to Moses who stretched forth his hands to God, or to Aaron and Hur who stayed them, or to Joshua who commanded, or to the soldiers who fought. To whom, then? "Moses built an altar, and called the name of it *Jehovah my banner.*" To God continually, and not to men, do the Scriptures erect monuments to commemorate successes.

Were I to bring forward every thing relative to this subject, I would have to go over the whole history of the Old Testament. But what shall we say of the New Testament history? This perhaps was written by the apostles and their disciples to advance the honour and glory of the apostles? Nay, in it also, God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, alone is extolled. Without him the apostles are nothing; without him "neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth." Without him they are only poor and illiterate fishermen and carpenters, men indocile, destitute of understanding, imbued with many prejudices, often timid, pusillanimous; trusting to their own strength, they are disgracefully put to shame; inconstant friends who cleave to the best of masters in prosperity, in adversity forsake, nay deny him; doubt of his resurrection, so often foretold, nay obstinately disbelieve it. But how changed from their former selves, after they had received the Holy Spirit on the feast of Pentecost. Then all at once these dis-

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men are prepared to engage in a work than which the  
er saw and does not now see a greater, to convert the  
God and to Christ. Then the treasure, than which  
not another more precious, is from these earthen ves-  
ed out on the whole world, "that the excellency of  
er may be of God, not of men."\* "But God hath  
ne foolish things of the world to confound the wise;  
hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound  
gs which are mighty; and base things of this world,  
gs which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and  
hich are not, to bring to nought things that are; that  
should glory in his presence."† There can be no  
erefore, that the whole of the history of Scripture has  
lar reference to God, and that in this respect it is dis-  
ed from all others. In them, you admire men alone;  
d alone. In them, men do every thing, God nothing;  
n does nothing, God every thing.

In order to show the influence which the preceding  
ts, respecting the scope of the sacred Scriptures,  
ve on our minds, let us suppose that a wise man, un-  
ed with holy writ, has been led to acknowledge that  
d. that mankind, and consequently himself, are from  
nt from him they derive all things, whatever they are,  
er they have; and that he thence infers that man

own excellence ; or if there are some who speak of God, that they speak of him ambiguously to display their recondite wisdom and power of oratory. He nowhere perceives a zeal for God and for his glory. If he reflect on these things as he ought, he will bewail the infatuation and corruption of his heart, will deplore the universal misery of men, who have so far departed from the end they should have had in view, and with much greater justice than the Epicurean poet, will exclaim,

*O miseras hominum mentes, O pectora cœca !  
Qualibus in tenebris vitæ, quantisque periculis  
Degitur hoc ævi quodcunque est.*

Let us suppose that while these thoughts are passing through his mind he unexpectedly meets with that hitherto unknown book, the Scriptures. He begins to read, " In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." Its beautiful commencement, so glorifying to God, so agreeable to reason, arrests his attention. He proceeds. How did God create all things ? He said, Let them be, and they were. Nothing can be more sublime than this. In what condition did he create them ? " God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good." All that follows is of the same tenor ; it all points to God. The tendency of what Moses, Joshua, and all the rest have written is the same. God is the author of every page.

*Principio medium, medio non discrepat imum.*

Whatever is hostile to God it destroys in the soul of man ; whatever cannot be destroyed is directed to God ; its doctrines, its prophecies, its histories, speak of nothing but God ; all exclaim, " Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to thy name give glory ;" it is not permitted to us even to eat and to drink but to the glory of God ; in our daily prayers we are not allowed to ask for bread till we have prayed, " Hallowed be the name of God, let the kingdom of God come, let the will of God be done."

What opinion will our reader entertain respecting this new book ? Perhaps he will find in it many things hard to be believed, many things difficult to be understood ; its method, and its phraseology, not formed according to the rules of rhetoricians, may not at first please him. But its tendency will instantly commend itself to his mind ; he will see that it alone is free from that corruption which he has deplored, and is alto-

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different in its character from those books which he pre-  
studied: that its aim alone is what it ought to be.  
Thoughts will thus arise in his mind? Will he not  
that God, without whose will nothing can take place,  
peculiar providence communicated this book to men,  
view of recalling to the right way, and of bringing  
in their vain pursuit to their Creator, those whom he

*Errare, atque viam palantes quaerere vitæ?*

not suppose, when he sees that the design of this book  
me with that of God in creating the universe, that its  
also is the same? Will he not suppose that the writers  
book, who everywhere exhibit this indifference to man,  
for the glory of God, were not men like himself, or like  
th whom he is acquainted; that they were under the  
not of that spirit which looks to man alone, but of  
it which has God for its object? The more enlarged  
aintance with mankind, the more frequently he has  
ed in others, and the more fully he feels in himself,  
cult it is for man even in a single action to deny him-  
regard God alone, the greater will be his admiration of  
d writers. Here he perceives, not without amazement,



other books in which he formerly delighted, from the perusal of which he always rose full of the admiration of vanity; he will feel that from the perusal of it, on the contrary, he always rises full of admiration of God. As often as he reads it he is inflamed with zeal for God, God draws his heart to himself; when his zeal for God diminishes, the love of this book becomes faint, when the former is strengthened, the latter is revived; when his heart is entangled by the love of the world, his delight in Scripture decays; when it returns to God, his delight in Scripture—in which he finds God everywhere, in which he meets “him whom his soul loveth”—returns. Now may God give both to you and to me this grace, this zeal which I have hitherto in a figure transferred to another; and may he by this impart both light and influence to our arguments. May God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shine in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

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## NOTES.

I. Page 468. We may safely affirm that no deist ever read the Scriptures with that seriousness of disposition which becomes a rational being pondering the most important subject to which his attention can be directed; or even with a true desire to understand their contents. If they peruse them at all, it is with minds full of prejudice, or with the view of detecting something which they may make the subject of a profane jest or of unholy ridicule. “They speak evil of the things which they understand not.”

II. Page 469. “Desired to be reconciled to him when he was offended.” The words in the original are, “*ita offensum placarent.*” The inaccuracy of this expression need not be pointed out. From other passages of the Dissertation, however, it is evident that it was not designed to insinuate that men are capable of making atonement to God for their transgressions. We therefore understand it in the same sense in which we explain the words of the prophet, “Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me, and he shall make peace with me.” Isaiah xxvii. 5.

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page 471. It would be easy to produce from the writings of many fidels many testimonies to the excellence of Christianity. Bolingbroke affirms, that if Christianity has been a good invention, it is the most amiable invention that was ever proposed on mankind for their good; that it contains a simple and intelligible rule of belief, worship and manners; that the gospel is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity. Rousseau makes the following acknowledgment—"I will confess to you, further, that the majesty of the Scripture strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the Gospel hath its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, and their pomp of diction—how mean, how contemptible they appear compared with the Scripture. Is it possible that a religion so simple and sublime should be merely the work of man?"

Is it possible that the sacred personage whose history is contained in the Bible should be himself a mere man?" Do these men make acknowledgments speak their real sentiments? Why do they not become Christians? "They loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Page 180. "There can be no doubt that the more fully

because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight." " God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."

V. Page 493. The fact in proof of which the testimony of Luke is here adduced can easily be established independently of Scripture. Suetonius, describing the transactions of the reign of Nero, says, "The Christians, a race of men of a new and mischievous superstition, were punished." And Tacitus tells us that Nero, in order to put an end to the report that he had himself ordered Rome to be set on fire, "charged the crime upon a class of people hated for their wicked practices, and vulgarly called Christians, on whom he inflicted the most cruel punishments. The author of this name," he adds, "was Christ, who, during the reign of Tiberius, was put to death by Pontius Pilate, the procurator. This pernicious superstition, though checked for a short period, broke out again, spreading not merely throughout Judea, where it originated, but through Rome also."

VI. Page 496. It might have been added, that on the supposition that Christ and the apostles had conspired to propagate a falsehood, the latter must have been conscious that the eternal life promised to them, and by them to others, which was the only reward they could expect, had in reality no existence.

VII. Page 499. Such *was* the case in the age and in the country to which our Author belonged. That such *ought* to have been the case, that even open infidelity should subject men to the hazard of property, or liberty, or life, few will now contend. Assuredly the infliction of civil penalties on account of infidelity, will not tend much to increase the number of those who sincerely believe the truth of the miracles of Christ.

VIII. Page 506. How admirable is the wisdom displayed in those arrangements, which, while they provided for the complete attestation of the miracles of Christ, at the same time secured the fulfilment of the divine counsel respecting him, and the accomplishment of the predicted work of the Messiah. The reader who wishes a full investigation of the subject referred to in the text, the privacy of our Saviour's appearances

to his disciples after his resurrection, may consult Horsley's Sermons on Acts x. 41.

IX. Page 508. Christ did perform miracles in Nazareth. Matthew says, "He did not *many* mighty works there, because of their unbelief;" and Mark, "He could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands on a few sick folk and healed them." For the fewness of the miracles performed by him in Nazareth, two reasons may be assigned. The first is, that the unbelief of his countrymen prevented them from coming to him to be cured of their infirmities. And the second is, that those who did come to him came not in a right spirit, but that they might put him to the test, and, if possible, expose his want of power; and he would not work miracles to gratify an idle curiosity, or to satisfy the wayward humour of unreasonable opponents. See Luke xxiii. 8, 9; Mark ix. 14—27.

X. Page 509. It is a fallacy to suppose that miracles were intended to be a means of the conversion of sinners, yet this idea is the true source of the expectation of the revival of miraculous gifts at the commencement of the millenary state of the church. The truths of revelation are the only means of conversion employed by the Spirit; and the chief design of miracles was the attestation of these truths. Now, as their divine origin has already been fully evinced, no new attestation is necessary, or can be expected.

XI. Page 514. Though many commentators have entertained the opinion that the persons referred to in Luke ix. 49 were enemies of Christ, or at least worthless persons like the sons of Sceva, yet the answer which Christ returned to John, an answer which intimated that those who did not oppose his cause were, in the judgment of charity, to be considered as wishing well to it, and that he was willing to accept even the most inconsiderable testimony of esteem and affection, seems rather to indicate that they were favourably inclined to him, and regarded him with veneration, though afraid openly to avow themselves his disciples. See Mark ix. 39—41.

XII. Page 515. The mere fact that a minister of the gospel is not a subject of divine grace, does not destroy the validity of his ministry, and though it may lessen, will not entirely prevent his usefulness; for none of the ordinances of Christ are made effectual to the salvation of men by "any virtue in

them, or in him that doth administer them." Judas was an apostle, and as lawful an apostle as either Peter or John. But we cannot subscribe to all the views on this subject maintained by Dr. Werenfels. When either a minister's doctrine or his practice are *openly* at variance with the religion which he professes to teach, are we to believe, as a late writer has affirmed, that "the people are called by the providence of God to the exercise of" nothing but "faith, and penitence, and prayer for their minister?" That they ought to pray for his conversion no man will deny. But are they not bound to save themselves and their families from the contaminating influence of "damnable heresies," and no less damnable practices, by endeavouring to obtain the removal of one whose doctrine and life are in the highest degree injurious to the interests of truth and godliness; or if they cannot obtain his removal, by forsaking his ministry, and seeking elsewhere that advantage to their souls which they cannot expect from him? Judas was recognised as an apostle only while his profession of religion was supported by a consistent external conduct. But had he continued to preach after by betraying his master he had given evidence that his heart was not right with God, would such reasoning as Dr. Werenfels has employed have justified those who adhered to his ministry? And what are erroneous and immoral pastors but persons who betray the Son of Man with a kiss? Among the Jews, hereditary descent was a necessary qualification for the office of the priesthood, which was by divine appointment restricted to a particular family. The desertion of the ministry of the sons of Aaron was a virtual apostasy from the system of Moses. But we will look in vain for any thing in Scripture which requires or would have sanctioned submission to the instructions of a false prophet, even although he had been educated in the schools of the prophets. The frequent injunctions which Christ gave to his disciples to beware of "the leaven of the doctrine of the Scribes and Pharisees," might, we think, have prevented the appeal that is made to Matth. xxiii. 1—3. The Scribes and Pharisees are there spoken of, not as teachers, but as members of the Sanhedrim, invested with judicial authority.

XIII. Page 529. There is here a mingling together of the character of God, or of the Father viewed as the representative of the Godhead, and of the mediatory character of the Second Person of the Trinity. But the justice of the general sentiment intended to be established is not at all affected by this.

XIV. Page 530. In reference to this subject, we may quote the sentiments of the late Dr. Dick, in illustration of the miracle recorded Acts xvi. 16—18. “Those who can consult the original will find, that the spirit who possessed this young woman was the same who was supposed to inspire the priestess of Apollo at Delphi, and to deliver oracles in the name of that pretended divinity. That this was a real possession, might be proved by all the arguments which apply to the cases of the same kind that occur in the gospels. The opinion, that the evangelists, when relating possessions, do not express their own conviction, but accommodate their language to the vulgar belief of their age, is inconsistent with their acknowledged integrity and veracity, represents them as ascribing miracles to our Saviour which he did not perform, and is contradicted by a variety of circumstances, which clearly show the unhappy persons to have been under demoniacal influence. By representing the spirit as the same individual, or of the same character with the spirit who actuated the Delphian priestess, Luke seems to favour the idea that impure spirits were concerned in the heathen oracles, and that the prophets of paganism spake by their inspiration. This opinion was commonly held by the fathers; but by the more sceptical moderns those prophets are generally believed to have been impostors, and the oracles to have been contrivances of the priests to impose upon the credulity of mankind. The truth perhaps lies between these extremes, and while much ought to be ascribed to the artifice of men, something should be allotted to the interference of the demons of darkness. Satan was the god of this world; he reigned among the Gentiles during the ages of idolatry without a rival, and he may have been permitted to exercise a power over his deluded votaries, which ceased when Christianity was fully introduced.” *Lectures on the Acts*, vol. ii. pp. 17, 18.

XV. Page 532. The good taste displayed in this quotation may be doubted. Language which, when employed in reference to a man, is in the highest degree laudatory, may, when applied to God, instead of exalting our conception of his character and actings, excite feelings the tendency of which is entirely the reverse.

THE END.











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